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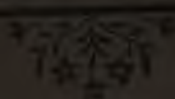
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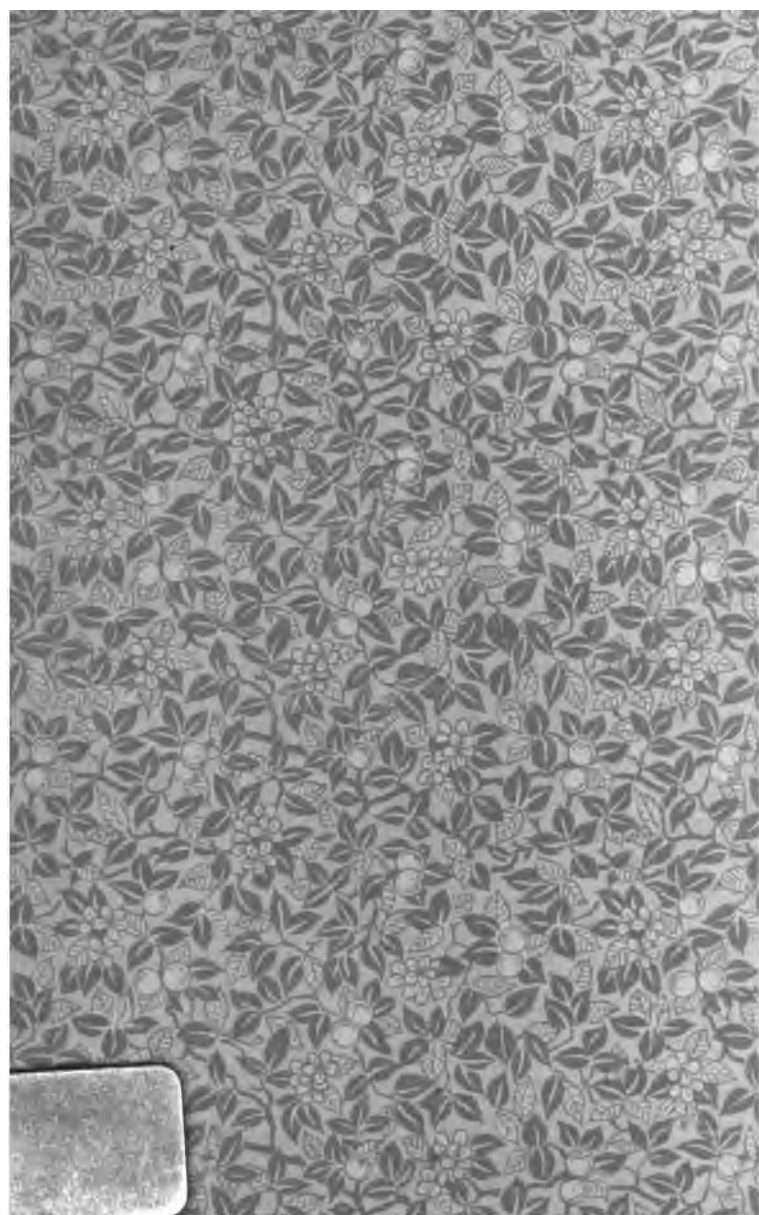


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MRS. CASHEL HOEY









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# THE CLIENTS OF DOCTOR BERNAGIUS.

*From the French of M. Lucien Biart.*

BY  
MRS. CASHEL HOEY.



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## P R E F A C E.

THE Mexican tales which are for the first time presented to English readers in a collective form in this volume, are of strange interest. They belong to a series of works by M. Lucien Biart, who holds a place in the first rank of French writers, and who has adopted an entirely novel method of introducing his own countrymen to Spanish-American life and manners. The *Spectator* has recently pronounced Dr. Bernagius, the good physician and impassioned naturalist, into whose mouth M. Lucien Biart puts his strange, romantic, and amusing utterances, to be the most entertaining personage with whom we have been made acquainted by modern French literature. The author's conception of the character of the doctor, the quaint idea of him conveyed by the stories, the way in which he impresses himself with extraordinary realism upon those who



are following with him the fortunes of the persons whose history he narrates, are of a high order of literary skill, and rich in subtle and attractive humour. Dr. Bernagius is an unconscious hero. He is so entirely devoted to his studies as a naturalist that he is unaware of the comedy of their interruption by the most terrible calamities of human life, and of his own quiet, matter-of-fact relapse into those studies. He is so devoted to his duties as a physician that he is unconscious of the heroism which he displays in their fulfilment. He is that rarest of all characters, in real life or in fiction, an absolute original, entirely devoid of pretence or of self-consciousness. There is real genius in the character of Dr. Bernagius. For his stories of his "Clients," it may be said that they are full of vitality, of the interest of human passions, of a quaint and delightful individuality, and that their local colouring is perfect. His readers will, perhaps, be interested in learning how highly M. Lucien Biart's interpretation to the Old World of Mexico and its manners is appreciated in the New ; and I have therefore thought it well to subjoin the following extract from a long article which appeared in 1874, in a

Mexican monthly review, entitled *El Artista*, on the occasion of the publication of M. Biart's well-known works, *La Terre Temporée* and *La Terre Chaude*, and of the first appearance of his Mexican stories in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

"The characters which M. Lucien Biart depicts are true types of our people; they are living, complete, painted from nature. The background of all his narratives is absolutely exact; the interest of the stories is thrown out into strong relief by it; the drama unfolds itself with all the precision of reality. M. Lucien Biart depicts our customs with the most scrupulous fidelity. The title which he has bestowed upon those stories, that of 'Mexican' tales, is perfectly justified, not only by the place in which the action occurs, and by the names of the persons concerned, but because the characters, manners, and language are all essentially Mexican. Each incident which the author brings out, reveals some peculiarities of our temperament, our habits, our special modes of speech, or our popular phraseology, sometimes also certain of our qualities, or the typical traits of our physiognomy. One point is especially remarkable. Every one knows that each country has its own special manner of

constructing conversation, and that this distinctive method defies all imitation on the part of a foreigner. M. Biart has conquered the difficulty. He has so thoroughly impressed upon his dialogue the *cachet* of the Mexican manner of speech that one might suppose that part of his work to have been taken literally from the Spanish, and translated into the French."

If the doctor should prove as popular among English as he is among French and Mexican readers, a second series of his experiences will shortly be offered for their approbation.

THE TRANSLATOR.

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THE GREAT GOMARA.

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# THE CLIENTS OF DOCTOR BERNAGIUS.

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## CHAPTER I.

I AM about to relate the history of a book, and I shall begin with an incident which took place on the 17th of March, 1859. At about nine o'clock on the evening of that day I was apprised of the decease of my excellent friend the Licentiate Perez, who had just died, fortified by all the rites of the Church, at his humble house in the cathedral close at Puebla. When, thirty years ago, I went up for examination before the School of Medicine of the Mexican Republic, Perez was one of my examiners; for, in addition to being an



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eminent theologian, lawyer, and archæologist, my venerable friend was a learned botanist. At that period his library, which was one of the most complete in the New World, already numbered among its treasures two entirely priceless bibliographical curiosities. One of these was an octavo of seventy sheets, brought out in Paris in 1523 by the sworn bookseller to the University, Simon de Collines, resident in the Rue Saint Jehan de Beaulvais, at the sign of the Soleil d'Or, and entitled *Voyage et Navigation faïct par les Espagnols ès Isles Mollusques ; des isles qu'ils ont trouvées au dict voyage, des rois d'isolles, de leur gouvernement ou manière de vivre, avec plusieurs autres choses*. This title, being interpreted, was as follows : " Travel and Navigation of the Spaniards in the Moluccas, with a record of the islands which they discovered on the said voyage, the kings of the same, their government and manner of living, together with many other things." The book, which contains four sheets of tabular

statistics, is, as every one knows, the first French work on America ever published. Many a sleepless night did that precious volume cost me before I succeeded in discovering a clean and uninjured copy, which is, at the present time of writing, probably unique.

The Licentiate Perez was, however, like a true connoisseur, especially proud of his *Historia General de las Indias*, by Francisco Lopez de Gomara. He possessed the priceless *editio princeps*, printed in 1552 at Saragossa, by A. Millan. Lopez de Gomara—I note the fact because I have actually met with persons who appear to be ignorant of it—was the first Spanish writer who treated of Mexico; and, besides this, there is another circumstance on which no author has hitherto commented. It is that the book appeared in the year of the Treaty of Passau, at the very moment when Charles V. found himself obliged to grant freedom of conscience to the Lutherans.

The news of the Licentiate's death

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affected me painfully, and I read the letter which informed me of that sad event several times. I wanted to write and to study, but my thoughts recurred, in spite of myself, to the far-distant day on which I had worn my doctor's cap and gown for the first time. In the evening of that memorable day the worthy Licentiate had regaled me with high-spiced dishes and his celebrated wine of Xeres, vulgarly called sherry; and I, though far, indeed, from comprehending the full value of the treasure, had admired his Gomara. And now—I put the question to myself with poignant anxiety—what would become of the books which a whole life of research had enabled the Licentiate to get together? Mechanically my eyes sought my own collection, which would have equalled that of the deceased, if I could have filled up the gap left intentionally between Torquemada's *History* and that of Solis, a gap which ought to have been filled by the *editio princeps* of Gomara (Saragossa, Millan,

1552). This work I had not yet been able to procure.

I had been living at Orizava for twenty years, and during all that time I never visited a patient without asking to see all the books in the house. Gomara's work must have been widely spread throughout Mexico when it first appeared, and I was always hoping that a happy chance might enable me to lay my hands on the *editio princeps*, which was the most defective of all. My perfectly natural curiosity was actually regarded as a mania, and to this day I cannot go into a Mexican's house but he will bring me *Manuals of Confession* and Lavalley's *Dialogues*, although he has already shown them me a hundred times. I take good care, however, not to complain of this officious civility, for it was thus that I discovered the Gomara published at Antwerp in 1554, a tolerably good edition which satisfies mere amateurs.

Poor Perez! he was such a childlike good soul! Mild, charitable, and generous,

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he was, perhaps, just a little too fond of his books. One day I proposed to him to let me have his Gomara.

“Not in exchange for your share of heaven,” was his quick and energetic reply.

After that, in every letter he would tell me of some fresh blunders of the author, or some printer’s error which he had just discovered in the precious volume; and on each several occasion I felt sad and envious.

The last time I saw the Licentiate—it was on the 27th of April, 1853—I asked him in jest to leave his Gomara to me at his death. This harmless request seemed to disconcert and trouble him, and I really believe he resented it. The poor Licentiate! He was a good Christian, a true believer, but by no means in a hurry to take his departure for that better world, my share of which he had so rashly rejected. I could not help reflecting on this as I reperused the letter in which his name,

titles, and qualifications were set forth, with the customary formula, *Requiescat in pace*, at the end.

“ ‘*Requiescat in pace !* ’ ” I repeated mechanically ; “ what an absurdity ! Who knows whether, far from resting in peace, Perez is not at this moment bitterly regretting that he did not let me have his Gomara ? That precious, precious book, into what hands may it not fall ! Perhaps it has already been destroyed, stolen, or sold for half nothing ! ” I rose, and strode rapidly up and down my study, a prey to the torment of that agonizing idea. As the clock struck twelve a happy idea occurred to me, and I stopped short in my restless walk.

The diligence, by which, since 1821, travellers have been conveyed from Vera Cruz to Mexico, generally passes through Orizava at one o'clock in the morning. In less than eighteen hours I might reach Puebla, and have an interview with the Licentiate's housekeeper before any pro-

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fane hand should have been laid upon his books. Dona Gertrude was very devout, and I might propitiate her with the handsome rosary which the General of the Jesuits had sent me from Rome in acknowledgment of my book upon the missions of the famous "Company." At any rate, thus I should learn what were the testamentary dispositions of Perez, and who were his heirs. A sudden pain darted through my temples as the terrible idea occurred to me : what if Perez had destroyed the Gomara ? But no, no ; he was not a bad man, and he loved books.

I would not waste another moment in reflection ; but, having hastily filled a small travelling-bag with a few necessaries, I aroused my servant and gave him a letter, which he was to hand to one of my brother physicians. In this letter of a few lines I had asked my friend to take charge of my patients in my absence. The Indian, half-dressed and only half-awake, listened to my directions open-mouthed, without appear-

ing to understand what I was saying. I had to tell him three times over to shut the door before he obeyed me.

The clock struck one ! What if the diligence had already passed ! I began to run. As I neared the courtyard of the posting-house, I observed an unusual stir and noise. People were coming and going and shouting ; a great fire of pine-logs threw a red glare upon at least a hundred faces, which were all full of curiosity. Three vehicles, one of them a small calèche, with four black mules harnessed to it, were drawn up in single file. On ordinary occasions only the old yellow diligence that I knew so well stood at the yard-gate. The tired, dusty, sleepy travellers, hardly visible by the light of two dim lanterns, would slip into their places after a ghostly fashion, a whistle would sound, and the lumbering vehicle drawn by eight mules would move off, leaving darkness and silence behind it. On the present phenomenal occasion I found the postmaster presiding in person




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over the proceedings, and as accurately dressed as though the time were midday.

I was about to question somebody or other, when the curious bystanders uttered simultaneous exclamations, and crowded round the calèche. A young woman, dressed in black, and wearing a red hood, had made her appearance at the entrance to the posting-house. I am not a connoisseur in beauty, but I must say that I was struck by the large blue eyes and the finely-cut features of the fair traveller. To my profound surprise, all present doffed their hats as she advanced, leaning on the arm of a gentleman, who smiled as he spoke to her, while she looked vacantly at the crowd. She stepped into the calèche, a serving-woman took a place opposite to her, and the carriage rolled away.

“Good heavens, doctor!” said the postmaster, who had at length become aware of my presence, “do you mean to say that you want a place in the diligence to-night?”



“Certainly I do. But what is all this noise about?”

“What is it about? Why, doctor, are you the only person in the place who does not know that the Italian Opera Company arrived the day before yesterday, and that we are sending them on to Puebla? You have seen Tomasi, at all events?”

“Not that I know of; and, indeed, my dear Don Mateo, I am much less anxious to see her than I am that you should secure my place for me.”

The worthy postmaster received this declaration with great surprise.

“Go back to your bed, doctor,” said he, tapping me confidentially on the shoulder, “and I will keep a place for you for to-morrow.”

“I shall do nothing of the sort,” I replied; “I must be at Puebla this evening.”

“That is impossible; look, and judge for yourself.”

The call-bell rang, and a swarm of pas-

sengers of both sexes scaled the sides of the diligences. I don't know what it was that came over me: the Gomara of 1552 with its uneven margins, its double title, its parchment binding, passed before my eyes. I forsook my travelling-bag, and climbed up on the "imperial" of the foremost vehicle, firmly resolved that nothing should induce me to get down again.

The postmaster stood gazing at me in silent and motionless astonishment. Three passengers, following my example, clambered up in their turn to the lofty perch.

I was prepared to say to them, after the manner of Themistocles, "Strike!" but in the meantime I laid hold of the driver, whose arm I had mended twice, and clung to him.

"I must go; I must, I must!" said I to him imperatively.

He turned round, and gravely touched his hat.

"You here, doctor!" said he, measuring with his eye the distance between the

place where I stood, clutching him, and the ground. "How in the world did you get up?"

"I don't know, my good Gutierrez; but I really must go with you."

"Unless your honour takes the place of my zagal, I—"

"Yes, yes!" I exclaimed delightedly. "Of course I will;" and I eagerly pounced upon the bag containing the stones which it is the duty of the zagal, or driver's assistant, to throw at the heads of those mules that are beyond the reach of the whip.

"I was only joking, sir. You, Doctor Bernagius, take the place of a zagal?"

"What do I care whose place I take, so that I reach Puebla? Let us be off at once," I added, in a whisper.

"Is all ready?" asked Gutierrez.

"Yes," answered the postmaster. "Wait a minute, though, until the doctor comes down."

"Off with you!" said I.

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The driver gave me a sidelong look and wink, clicked his tongue against his teeth, gathered up his reins, and pulled his mules together. The animals plunged, the Indian who stood at the heads of the leaders jumped aside, and we started at a smart gallop.

It was pleasant to breathe the fresh morning air, so much more life-giving than that of the day. However hard life may be, it has moments which give us an idea of that fleeting shadow—happiness. That was certainly a grand moment for me in which I wiped my scalpel after I had operated on Ignacio Mendez, and proved to my Mexican brethren that lithotomy is not always fatal. But I think I felt a still more full and perfect sense of satisfaction on this memorable night when I succeeded in getting a place on the diligence, without a notion of the series of adventures in store for me.

## CHAPTER II.

GOMARA, born at Seville in 1510, was for a long time Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Alcala, where Cervantes was born. From thence, Gomara went to America, where he resided for four years, during which time he wrote his *History of the West Indies and the Conquest of Mexico*. This work, in which the historian shows great partiality towards Fernando Cortez, had no rival until the publication of that written by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, which was dethroned in its turn by Solis' history.

In 1569, Gomara's work, translated into French by Fumée, printed by Bernard Tunisan at Paris, and bearing the Aldine anchor upon its title-page, had so great a

success that it went through several editions. Hence had arisen a controversy between Perez and me; for his translation, although bearing the same date as mine—1569—was sold by Michael Soninus. The poor Licentiate was a most obstinate, pig-headed person, and he would persist in asserting that the Soninus had preceded the Tunisian edition. This was a manifest error, as I should have been able to prove to him if he had been still in this world.

“Mind yourself, doctor, or you’ll get killed!” roared Gutierrez, just as a tremendous jolt all but threw me out of my seat. The Mexican zagal keeps his balance in his place beside the driver with such perfect apparent ease that I had not the least notion of what I should have to undergo in usurping his post. Clinging by both hands to the straps of the diligence-hood, my arms stiff with the continuous strain, I should have found it very difficult to throw even one stone at our unruly team;

and, in fact, I did not know what had become of the pouch of which I had taken possession so proudly. The moon shone brightly, and its light gave the plain the mirage-like effect of a lake. I should have been glad to study this phenomenon, but the jolts and bumps of the vehicle were so violent that my head and my stomach were both turning, so I had to keep my eyes and my mouth shut.

One of the Italians who sat behind me was asleep; his two companions were smoking and talking. I understand the Italian language, and between two jolts, of which one nearly broke my ribs and the other all but flung me into the road, I learned that Signora Tomasi, the *prima donna*, who had gone on before us in the calèche, was bound for Puebla, where a series of operatic performances were about to take place. She had come from Havana, where her beauty and talent had found numerous admirers, and among them the young Count Moro, who had actually



procured an engagement in the company, in I do not know what capacity, so as to be near the object of his passion.

"Poor boy! He does not know that the Tomasi is a body without a soul," said one of the speakers.

"A body without a soul, Fanti? If she were to turn her eyes on you, they would scorch you up to nothing."

"You believe her capable of loving, then?"

The other began to laugh.


"You have only known her for a year, Fanti," he answered; "otherwise you would talk very differently. Of course you are not aware that she struck her lover with a dagger at Florence, because he had applauded the Stefanone."

"Artist's jealousy!"

"Woman's jealousy! The Tomasi became indifferent to him and everybody else after a mysterious adventure which befell her. It is said that in Paris she took a fancy to the Duc de M., who did not re-

spond. She immediately broke off her engagement, and she is making our fortune now by travelling about with us. At the bottom of her doings there is, I believe, simple boredom. She has outlived her illusions. She is *blasée*, as the French say; but she will wake up again one of these days, and you will find out what sort of a woman and artist the Tomasi is."

The white houses of the village of Aculcingo—Gomara could not make mention of it, for of the two roads that led to Mexico, he followed that which crosses Perote—came in sight. We rejoined the calèche, which soon dropped behind us, and, after we had changed our team, the diligence entered upon the interminable zigzag of the Cumbrès. I had abandoned my place, which could not now be disputed with me, with the intention of climbing the mountain on foot. By taking a short cut I might gain the summit in an hour, while the diligence would take at least twice that time to accomplish the same



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distance. Thus I should secure an interval, in which to breathe, at Puente Colorado.

It was daylight when I reached the bridge, which owes its name to the ferruginous soil of the ravine that it spans, and all the dwellers on the heights, on recognizing me, welcomed me joyfully. While Antonio went off to fetch his housekeeper's mass-book that I might look at it, the old woman offered me a cup of milk. Presently the calèche came up; being less heavily laden than the diligence, it had again taken the lead. The driver came to salute me in the Indian fashion by kissing my hand, and at the same moment the Signora Tomasi alighted from the carriage, and stood looking at us with evident curiosity. Presently she drew near, asked for water, and after having drank it, withdrew to a few paces' distance.

She was of middle height, of a slender figure, and in all her movements there was a charming natural grace. Her expression

was listless, sad, and absent; nevertheless, when Antonio, who had been a great admirer of the fair sex in his day, drew himself up and exclaimed, "By the Holy Virgin, doctor, that's a fine woman!" the Tomasi turned her head, smiled, showing as she did so two perfect rows of pearly little teeth, and cast a piercing shining glance upon us which made me quite confused, for I was afraid she attributed the rude remark of the old man to myself. Nothing of the sort; she not only knew that it was Antonio who had so indiscreetly praised her charms, but it was to him that she addressed a gracious bow as she drove off. What a strange creature is woman!

Just as the calèche disappeared the two diligences came in sight; and, in a few minutes, Antonio's farm was invaded by ten young women and as many young men, all chattering that harmonious Italian language in which A. de Cravaliz published at Rome, in 1555, Dorici's


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translation of Gomara's work. This is the first known translation, and on that point there was a long controversy between Perez and me. He had Dorici's edition, the *Historia di Mexico* of 1555, with the *Historia delle Indie Occidentali* in the edition of 1556; two works which have nothing in common except that they are both borrowed from Gomara, as my learned friend was forced to admit, when I enabled him to compare them.

At about one o'clock in the morning, when we were all dusty, breathless, and dumb from fatigue, we alighted at the door of the inn at the little town of San Agostino. The Italians, unused to travelling under such conditions, complained bitterly that they had been racketed over a horrible road strewn with blocks of lava and full of ruts. I did not make any complaint at all; but the extensory muscles of my arms seemed to be quite paralyzed. If I had had any less important object than the *editio princeps* of

Gomara in view, I think I should have given up my journey.

We were still at breakfast when the calèche turned into the yard. The Signora Tomasi alighted, entered the inn, and took her seat beside me. The dining-room was crowded with the inhabitants of the place, all burning with curiosity; and the chief ones among them came to greet me, as an excuse for their presence there. Between each mouthful I had to shake hands with some one, and my right arm, thus kept in constant motion, gave me intolerable pain. The great singer seemed surprised that I should have so many friends. It was known that I had come there in the zagal's place, and every one joked and laughed about it. Indeed I had to laugh at myself, though I was not precisely in a merry mood. While talking to my acquaintances I was also endeavouring to pay those delicate attentions to my neighbour which every gentleman owes to a woman. She thanked me



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in French, and complimented me in that language upon the correctness with which I spoke Italian.

The hour of torture arrived, and I was about to betake myself sorrowfully to the diligence, when the Tomasi addressed me,—

“Will you not accept a seat in my carriage, doctor? You will be much more comfortable there than on your box. My maid can now get a place in one of the diligences.”

I bowed; I was too much moved for speech. The truth is I perceived, to my great regret, that my twentieth year lay very far back in the past, and that I should not have strength to get to Puebla, even by holding on to the straps of the diligence-hood. I had indeed been thinking of doing the remainder of the journey on foot.

After a brief silence I exclaimed,—

“Ah, I shall owe it to you if I once more behold Gomara!”

Then I bowed low again without another

word, and the signora looked at me attentively. She seemed rather puzzled. I apprised Gutierrez of the kind offer I had received, and he answered by his favourite grimace—a wink. All of a sudden I uttered an involuntary and irrepressible exclamation. Among the curious idlers crowding around the vehicles I had recognized one of the brigands of the “Lobo’s” band. No robbery had been committed on the road from Orizava to Puebla for a fortnight past, and the celebrated captain of the band was said to be engaged on business in the neighbourhood of Queretaro. I manœuvred so as to get near the *caballero* in question. I wanted to give him a message for his captain; not that I was personally acquainted with that personage, but that he had recommended two of his men to me as patients. No doubt my proceedings caught the gentleman’s attention, for he vanished.

“We shall be robbed,” I said to myself.




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Some one called me, and I took my place opposite the Tomasi, thinking it prudent to keep my own counsel, and spare my travelling-companions apprehension and uneasiness. Two minutes later we set off at the tremendous pace at which Mexicans habitually drive; a pace which prevents their upsetting their vehicles at every stage upon roads that are marvels in point of laying out, but have not been repaired for more than half a century.

### CHAPTER III.

WE sped on our way, and my companion's nationality made me think of the appreciation of Gomara's work on the Western Indies by the Italians of the fourteenth century. To my mind there is no greater proof of the intellectual superiority of that nation, which was our first master in everything. Dorici's edition, published three years after the appearance of the original work, was followed by an edition without the printer's name, but bearing the numerals MDLVI. In 1560 the work was reprinted at Venice. It was not until nine years later that the French translation appeared, a fact of which Perez was fond



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of reminding me, in order to humble my national pride.

It may be admitted without shame that the French do stand only in the second line as translators of Gomara. But, on the other hand, the proud and haughty English are far behind us. It was not until 1578 that there appeared in London, at Henry Binneman's, the *Pleasant History of the Western Indies*, translated by T. N. (Thomas Nicholas). As for the Germans, they had no knowledge of Gomara until 1693, a century after us, and they then obtained it through a translation from the French version, by Thomas Gage (Leipzig, 1693), entitled *Neue Merkwürdige Reysebeschreibung nach New-Spanien, &c.* Perez, who had an incomprehensible weakness for the fellow-countrymen of Humboldt, was always beaten on this point; and on one occasion he was even forced to admit that a nation which had been so tardy in its recognition of such an author as Gomara can hardly ever expect to take the first

rank in the scientific world, whatever may be its later achievements.

A *tête-à-tête* with a pretty woman will be to all time an embarrassing situation for a man, however learned; and old Antonio had said no more than the truth—the Tomasi was very handsome. So long as the carriage was jolting and bumping along the streets of San Agostino, all conversation was impossible, and I gave myself up to my reflections. But when it began to roll noiselessly over the nitrous soil of the central plateau, I turned towards the singer, and remarked,—

“It is warm.”

“Very warm,” said she.

“So warm,” I resumed, “that the slightest breeze would be welcome.”

The signora made no answer except by a nod, and placed her two feet on the front seat. I could not refrain from admiring her little shiny black boots, marvels of workmanship, which a Mexican shoemaker would have been incapable of producing.

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“It is quite certain,” I thought, “that if Gomara had found himself seated by a pretty woman, who was, moreover, a renowned singer, he would have found something less commonplace to say.”

I was endeavouring to divine what Gomara would have talked about had he been in my place, when I perceived that my companion had closed her eyes and was fast asleep.

The two diligences rejoined us, and as they passed, Gutierrez did not fail to bestow on me his familiar wink. By degrees slumber stole over me. When we changed our mules at Acatzingo, I did indeed open my eyes, but it was almost unconsciously, and then I began to dream. I was lying on my bed, and Perez approached, his Gomara in his hand; he came nearer and nearer, and at last he laid the book upon my breast. But on the top of the much-coveted volume my friend piled others, without its being possible for me to see or to guess whence they came. The titles of

these books were written in fiery letters ; they were all the reprints, all the editions, all the translations of our dear author. With what pride and satisfaction did I bear the glorious burden at first ! But after a while I began to feel smothered, and then I suddenly awoke.

My travelling-companion was sleeping soundly. Her head was thrown slightly backwards, and her hair, which had been accidentally loosened, fell about her shoulders, and enclosed her fair face in a golden frame. I contemplated admiringly the silken fineness of her arched eyebrows, the length of her eyelashes, and the correct and delicate outline of her nose ; her red lips were slightly parted, and her transparent teeth, firmly set in the red gums which are a sure indication of health, were visible. The hood, displaced by a movement of the sleeper, had fallen off her head, and her white throat, in which, notwithstanding its position, there was not a crease, was revealed. How had Antonio

who was ten years my senior, and whose eyes were not nearly as good as mine, recognized at a glance the remarkable beauty of the Tomasi? It did not strike me until after I had critically observed her.

I derived a certain pleasure from looking at her ; but I denied myself the prolongation of it. I felt that I abused the generous kindness of the singer by thus examining her, and I turned away, and leaned over the opposite side of the carriage, trying to discover where we were; for I did not recognize this part of the road at all. Presently we entered a plantation of "agaves," that species of cactus from which a beverage called "pulque," much esteemed by the Mexicans, is made. The sun was going down ; we were approaching the village of Amozoc. On our right, a row of the tall pepper-trees of Peru stretched farther than I could see.

"Doctor, who is that man?" was said to me in Italian.

I turned, and saw the Tomasi leaning over the right side of the carriage, very wide awake indeed. She pointed to a tall man, mounted upon a magnificent Andalusian horse, who was passing along within a hundred feet of the carriage. I started.

"What is the matter, doctor?" asked my companion. "Is that man your enemy?"

"No," I replied; "but perhaps he may be yours, signora—he may have a fancy for your trunks. I am going to spare you, if I can, an experience which is common enough in Mexico, but none the less unpleasant for that."

The lady observed me curiously, while I called to the horseman. He looked round, reined in his horse sharply, making it bound and rear, and approached the carriage in a series of curvets.

The man was an Indian, with a golden bronze complexion, large black eyes, glittering teeth, and a low forehead covered with thick curling hair. His ugly face



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wore an expression of ferocity and determination; and the grace and suppleness of his movements, together with the wild look in his eyes, revealed the full-blooded Indian. By his mode of handling his horse, as well as by his accent and the construction of his sentences, I was led to believe that we had to deal with one of those Comanche warriors, who occasionally come and mingle in civilized life, until, being suddenly seized with the nostalgia of the desert, they rush off again and re-join their tribe.

"Is your captain on the road?" I asked.

"My captain?" he repeated; "who is that?"

"The Lobo, if you like it better."

"The Lobo! who is that?"

A conversation begun in this fashion, and with an Indian, might go on for ever. While speaking to me the man was staring at my companion with a steady insolence which incensed me.

"I am well known to your chief," I resumed, with an air of authority. "If you wish to gain a sure reward, let him know that Doctor Bernagius—"

"Is bringing him a woman as beautiful as the sun. By the faith of a Christian, doctor, you need not go any farther; if you are tired of your place the son of my mother is ready to relieve you of it, and you can ride my horse back."

"Signora," I exclaimed, so indignant that I stammered with anger, "pray pardon this fellow's ignorance."

The lady smiled; and I saw that the meaning of the saucy ruffian's speech had escaped her. I was about to give him a fitting reply, when the carriage came to a standstill.

"What is the matter?" cried I to the driver, who was mounted, postillion-wise, on one of the mules.

The man's body was bent on the neck of the animal, his head craning forward in an attitude of terror, as he pointed towards

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the horizon. I thought I heard two or three shots, and I plainly saw some little blue clouds floating above the bushes. The Indian seemed also to be listening. He suddenly bowed low to the Tomasi, spurred his horse, and darted away at full gallop. In a moment he had disappeared behind the pepper-trees, whose red pods were scattered all over the ground.

"Are we in danger?" inquired the singer.

"No; but our baggage—that is to say, yours—" I corrected myself, remembering that I had left my travelling-bag at Orizava—"is in jeopardy, I must confess."

I had alighted, and now the Tomasi followed my example, and stood in the roadway, leaning with passive languor on my arm.

"What must we do?" asked she, with perfect composure.

"We must just go on, signora. Our fate is inevitable; the brigands will look after us when they have done pillaging

your companions. If, however, the Lobo be commanding in person, we shall get off unhurt, except for the fright. He owes me two or three of those services which are never forgotten by this chivalrous and too often maligned people."

"The soldiers!" cried the driver.

At the farther end of the plain, on the edge of a wood, we descried twenty horsemen armed with lances surmounted by little fluttering pennons, scouring along at full speed. Ten minutes later we heard shots, very distinct this time, sharp, and without any echo, and the white clouds reappeared above the bushes. Then the vast plain flooded with the morning light resumed its solemn silence. A fight had evidently come off within a very short distance of the place where we were standing; and I expected soldiers or some of the bandits in flight to make their appearance. The Tomasi, with frowning brow and dilated nostrils, gazed anxiously in the direction which we were about to take.

Her taper fingers held my arm as though in a vice.

“Shall we go on, signora?”

“You are a brave man, doctor,” said she, as she observed that I stooped to gather a flower with a pale-blue corolla dotted with white specks, and examined it attentively.

“No,” I replied, “not at all; but Gomara, in his *History of the Indies*, speaks of this particular mauve, or mallow-flower, with its blue corolla—”

The surprised look in the lady’s face stopped me short.

“I meant,” said I, “that I have lived twenty years in Mexico, and been robbed on the highway forty-one times, so that an accident of that kind does not disturb me.”

The calèche resumed its way at a slow pace, and I was explaining to my companion that the Lobo’s band, attacked by the military force charged with the safety of the highways, had probably been dis-


persed, and that the soldiers were acting as an escort to the two diligences, when once more we came to a dead stop. We were now crossing the wood, alongside of which we had seen the soldiers pass, and our way was stopped by two dead mules. We again alighted, and found ourselves on the scene of the fight. All around us were scattered fragments of stuffs and broken trunks and boxes. A large red cloak was spread on the ground; I lifted a corner of it, and found that it concealed the corpse of one of the brigands. I knelt down beside the poor wretch, turned him over, and felt for his wound. At last I found it; he had been stabbed in the stomach: his death must have been instantaneous. The Tomasi, who had also knelt down, and was praying, watched me while I was handling the body, but when I approached her she rose from her knees, and instinctively recoiled from me. I understood this impulse, and was explaining to her that there was nothing

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really repulsive in a dead body while it retained warmth, when five or six masked horsemen debouched from the wood and surrounded the lady. I sprang towards them, shouting for the Lobo. One of the mounted men rode up to me, seized me by the collar, and dragged me along with him.

“So you know us, then!” he exclaimed; “by my patron saint, the acquaintance will do you no good.”

The brutal fellow turned his horse in among the trees; the Tomasi, whom two men were carrying off, shrieked to me to save her. My feet barely touched the ground, and every moment I expected to be crushed against the stem of a tree. Nevertheless, so strong is the instinct of self-defence, that I struggled, and tried to hit my enemy with my clenched fist, so as to make him let me go. I struck wildly, aimlessly, and immediately afterwards I felt the barrel of a revolver glide along my ear, a terrible noise deafened me, a



flash of flame lighted up the wood, and a blessed sense of calm succeeded to the violent bumps that had nearly shaken the life out of me. I seemed to be lying in a soft luxurious bed. I opened my eyes and found myself in Perez's study, seated before his reading-table, my feet reposing on the skin of that magnificent tiger which he always firmly believed he himself had killed. By my side stood the old house-keeper of my deceased friend, attired in deep mourning; and in front of me, wide open, its splendid Gothic characters standing out in black upon the yellow paper, lay the precious folio printed in 1552 by Millan at Saragossa, the *editio princeps* of Gomara.




## CHAPTER IV.

I KNOW not how long the strange vision lasted; but when at length I really did open my eyes, I found myself flat on my face among a heap of dead leaves; my arms felt paralyzed, and I perceived that I was tightly bound. Memory returned to me; I shuddered at the recollection of the revolver, which had actually touched my ear. I had heard the report, so that, according to the principles of physics, my head was intact, and the shock only had caused my swoon. I moved my neck, and then I felt pain in the shoulder—the ball had struck me there. But what had become of my companion? With a great effort I turned on my side, and found myself close to my

tormentor. He was stretched, like myself, on the ground; but his mouth was contracted, his eyes were fixed—he was dead.

I thought I must be only half-awake. My legs were free, and after several attempts I managed to get into a sitting posture. Within a few feet of me lay two more brigands, also dead. What did this butchery mean? What had happened during my swoon? I endeavoured to loose my arms, and to recall my senses. I was suffering from thirst, cruellest of all the enemies of man. For a glass of water I would have been capable of bartering the Gomara itself.

A faint groan reached my ear. I started, and looked at the brigands; not one of them stirred. I turned round on the other side very cautiously, and my throat became still more dry and burning. Against the black trunk of an “ahuéhuété,” a dicotyledon of the family of the coniferæ, stood out in strong relief the snow-white form of the Tomasi. The fair woman, her hair



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dishevelled, her eyes closed, her head bent forward, was bound, entirely naked, to a tree, whose rough bark bruised her tender flesh.

Two sashes of China crape had been employed for the purpose of binding her to the tree—one was fastened round her waist, the other tied her wrists together, and being looped to the lowest branch of the tree, forced the victim to keep her arms raised. Never to my knowledge has sculpture lent to the captive Andromeda a pose more touching, or beauty more perfect.

I looked at this beautiful but terrible spectacle in silent wonder for some moments. Then I observed, on my right, the man whom we had met that morning on the road. His forehead was cut and bleeding, but his eye was bright; and he knelt on the ground, supporting himself on his bloody sword. What had happened?

I dared not stir. Was this man going to kill me in my turn? Again I tried to

burst my bonds; but I soon found the effort vain and the suffering intolerable; so I resolved to put an end to the situation.

“Hollo, Don José!” I cried, in a hoarse voice.

The Indian sprang up, and faced me threateningly.

“By the bones of your mother,” said I very calmly, “will you strike a defenceless man?”

He shook his thick locks disdainfully, and glanced at his dead comrades.

“They were armed,” said he; and added proudly, “I am Acatl; my father commanded a hundred warriors.”

“So did mine,” I observed; “but when he was at the head of his voltigeurs he would not have left an old man like me garotted in this way.”

The Indian approached, cut my bonds, and returned to his former place opposite to the Tomasi. I rose to my feet, only to fall down again. I rubbed my numbed limbs hard, and, espying a pistol, rolled

myself along the ground until I could grasp the weapon. At length my blood began to circulate, and I was able to stand up and walk. Just then the Tomasi roused herself, and opened her arms widely. I saw her whole body undulate and struggle, as she strove to burst her bonds ; but, after a vain effort, her beautiful white limbs became motionless again, and tears streamed down her cheeks.

Acatl looked anxiously at me. I caught up the singer's gown, and approached her.

"Loose her," said I to the Indian, in a tone of authority, but without expecting to be obeyed. To my great surprise the brigand struck his forehead with his open palm, ran to the tree, and promptly cut the sashes. As she sank to the ground, the rough trunk tore her pearly skin. I saw drops of blood running down her side. The Indian, frightened at the result of his action, caught me by the arm.

"It is nothing," I said to him. "It

was not you, then, who tied her to the tree?"

He looked at me with fiery eyes; set his foot on the breast of one of his comrades, on whose livid face the sun was shining, and pointing to the others, said,—

"They wanted to outrage her, and they are dead."

I called the Tomasi by her name, but she, like myself, seemed to be stunned. I told the Indian to bring water; and he brought the gourd that hung from his saddle. It was empty, and he flung it down and broke it.

"Come!" said he.

"Can you walk?" I said to the singer.

She rose without replying, but could not stand on her feet without staggering and clinging to my arm. I was very near falling on the ground myself, for my legs were still very uncertain, when Acatl, swift as lightning, caught her up as he might have lifted a child, and struck in among the trees.

I followed him. The young woman, unconscious of what she was doing, clasped the neck of the Indian with her beautiful white arms. She was like a nymph carried off by a satyr. Now and then Acatl would utter a wild cry, and raise the fair form with which he was laden almost over his head ; then he would bound forward with fresh strength. I lost sight of him, and, quite out of breath, I was obliged to stop to listen and look for his tracks. At length I rejoined him ; he had set down his burden on some thick grass close to a spring. The signora, with half-shut eyes, leaned her head on the breast of the brigand, and her golden hair fell round her like a luminous veil. I made her drink some water ; she revived a little, and wrapped herself in the gown which I had carried all this time on my arm.

“ What an awful scene, doctor ! I thought you were dead.”

I briefly related my misadventure ; and, on her side, the singer informed me that,

after having stripped her, the brigands had tied her to a tree. Then a dispute arose between the ruffians, and in her fainting state she saw the Indian whom we had met on the road in the morning fall upon his companions. She heard bullets whistle and men utter wild cries, but all in a kind of nightmare. Then came silence and peace, and when she reopened her eyes she perceived Acatl kneeling on the ground steadfastly gazing at her.

"That man is a lion," said she, with a shudder; and then her head fell back again, and she once more closed her eyes.

I bade the Indian come away, in order to leave the lady free to clothe herself. My indiscreet companion complied reluctantly. His forehead was bleeding: I washed the wound; it was an insignifant sabre-cut. Then I proceeded to a medical inspection of myself. A swerve of my captor's horse had turned aside the ball that was to have blown my brains out; I had escaped with a scorch. I bathed in the river, and felt



much refreshed ; but I found it difficult to keep Acatl with me ; he wanted to get back to the spring-side. At length he escaped from me, and then I hastened to put on my clothes and inspect the weapon which I had picked up. I had the satisfaction of finding four chambers loaded, three more than I needed for keeping my new acquaintance within the bounds of respect. When I returned to the spring I found the fair Tomasi combing out her hair with her fingers, and trying to arrange it. Acatl, standing a few paces off, was attentively observing her, wondering no doubt at the difference between the gestures of the European and those of the women of his own country. The singer, although she was perfectly aware that we were still at the mercy of the brigand, smiled at his persistent contemplation of her. Women are diplomatic by nature.

“Do you feel able to walk ?” I asked the signora.

She rose, still giddy and staggering.

I questioned the Indian as to whether there was any dwelling in the neighbourhood.

“No,” was his answer.

“We want to go away.”

“To-morrow.”

“I am hungry,” said I, angrily, “and to-morrow—”

He looked around, and seemed to be considering.

“You would not know where to go to,” said he at length; and then he handed me his tinder-box, and, turning abruptly away, he disappeared among the trees. Presently I heard the sound of a horse’s gallop.

As a matter of fact, I should not have known how to find my way to the high road. I gathered together a pile of dry branches, and a fire was soon blazing at the feet of my companion in misfortune, who answered by monosyllables only to all my efforts to console her. As she sat on a stone on which I had heaped some soft moss, her hair bound by the scarlet sash

that had tied her wrists, she seemed to me more beautiful than ever in the double glow of the fire and her head-dress. I busied myself in gathering ferns, whereof to make a couch for her, as it was evident that we must wait for the dawn before resuming our journey.

I had sat down again, and was falling asleep, when Acatl came galloping up. He brought bread and fruit, which he laid at the Tomasi's feet. She ate a little, and Acatl, who had flung himself down by the fire, silently watched her every movement. Occasionally she rewarded him by a look. When she had eaten, I urged her to take some rest, and she complied. I seated myself near her, and was soon in dreamland myself. About midnight I awoke, and found the singer fast asleep; and the Indian, supported on his elbows, his chin resting on his hands, gazing at her like a tiger on the prowl. When the wood was lighted by the sun's rays, and musical with the voice of birds and the hum of insects, I looked for him in vain. Acatl had disappeared.

It was late when the Tomasi awoke, and looked about her wonderingly. She smiled as she noticed the couch on which she had been lying, rose to her feet, stretched her beautiful arms, and listened lazily to the nightingales, for in Mexico those birds do not wait for night to pour out the melody that is in them. We breakfasted on the remains of our supper, and then it was time to think of finding our way back to the high-road. The signora, as she leaned upon my arm, asked me all sorts of questions about the Indians, their morals, manners, customs, and ideas, and especially about Acatl, whose absence seemed to occupy her mind a good deal.

"The man is handsome," said she abruptly.

The irony of this remark struck me as rather cool.

"He saved you," said I, in a tone of rebuke.

She laughed, but said no more.

It was midday when we regained the

high-road. I had thought it prudent to make a considerable round in order to avoid the corpses, with which the vultures were already busy. As we came out into the road I saw the calèche drawn by two mules, all ready. A half-breed was in the driver's saddle.

"Is this for you?" asked he, pointing to the carriage.

"Yes."

"Get in then; those animals can only trot, and we shall hardly get to Puebla before night."

I handed my fair companion into the carriage. She seemed to leave the spot with reluctance; her gaze lingered on the edge of the wood. We had hardly started when Acatl appeared. He saluted the signora, and I saw her tremble from head to foot. The sight of this man was evidently repugnant to her.

"Oh doctor, what an adventure!" said the signora. "My companions must be

dreadfully frightened, and no doubt your friend Gomara thinks you are dead."


My friend Gomara! I could not help smiling at her mistake. She had heard me mention the celebrated Spanish historian several times, and she thought I was alluding to a friend to whose house I was going. I related the history of the contemporary of Cortez in detail, for she seemed to take pleasure in hearing it. Leaning against the side of the carriage by which Acatl rode, with eyes that now sparkled with animation and anon were languid and tearful, she marked the various phases of my narrative by smiles and nods. Women are more capable of understanding the minutiae of the sciences than their calumniators believe, and, for my part, I have always found them intelligent listeners.

While attending to my discourse, the signora was also following the manœuvres through which Acatl, a superb horseman, was putting his beautiful horse. Some-

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times the Indian would dart away at full speed, disappearing in a cloud of dust; and presently we would find him posted at turns of the road peculiarly suitable for ambuscades. He seemed to be escorting us; and I began to think that the Lobo, having been made aware of my presence, had charged this man with the duty of protecting me.

It was almost dark when we reached Pucbla. Our driver, actuated by a fine sense of honour, brought us at a great pace up to the wide gateway to the posting-house, and into the vast Moorish courtyard, whither, to my great surprise, the Indian followed us. A shout of welcome was raised by the actors, and other bystanders, who crowded the courtyard, when they beheld the Tomasi stepping out of the dusty equipage. She took my arm, and ascended the steps at the entrance of the inn. Just as, preceded by the head-waiter, we were about to pass under the gallery, a great clamour arose.



“The Lobo, the Lobo ! (The Wolf, the Wolf !) Shut the gates ! Arrest him !”

The Tomasi stopped and turned. Acatl, standing up in his stirrups, looked at her, drew his sword, and made his horse rear. The cries continued, and loud threats were uttered. Acatl shook his head ; his hat fell off, and his thick hair seemed to stand erect like a mane. Directing his horse towards the porch, he pulled up short at the foot of the steps, waved his sword in the air, and bowed low. Wheeling round on the threatening crowd, he cried proudly,—

“Yes, I am the Lobo !”

He then struck his spurs into his horse's sides, and the animal reared madly. The crowd recoiled before the dauntless attitude of the rider ; some one in the crowd fired a shot, but vainly. Acatl darted through the gateway, overturning five or six half-breeds who barred the way. The Tomasi, standing upright, with pale face and flaming eyes, held my arm in a convulsive clasp.



So soon as the Lobo had disappeared, her fingers relaxed their hold.

“ Will you still deny, doctor,” said she, leaning on me with all her weight, “ that this man is handsome ? ”

“ He is, above all, imprudent,” I replied. “ What an idea for him to come here with us, when there’s a price on his head ! ”

I had no time to say more ; the crowd surrounded us, and overwhelmed us with questions. The signora, who felt the same repugnance to narrating her adventure as I felt, hastened to shut herself up in the apartment that had been retained for her.

The same evening I went to poor Perez’ house. His servant was out. I was informed by a canon who had administered the last sacraments to my friend, that the deceased had bequeathed his library to the seminary. I skilfully questioned the good canon, with whom I supped ; but he could tell me nothing about the *editio princeps* of Gomara. Indeed, he seemed to be ignorant of its very existence.

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I returned to the hotel at eleven o'clock; and saw the Tomasi sitting on her balcony, her elbow on her knee, her chin on her palm, gazing pensively at the point of the horizon where Istaccihuatl rears its head, in the direction of the scene of our brief captivity.

## CHAPTER V.

I WAS up before dawn, although I was aware that I could not make my appearance at the late Licentiate's house at six o'clock in the morning. Such urgency would have looked odd, and it was my purpose to conceal the object of my journey. I walked to and fro in the narrow room that had been assigned to me, looking at my watch, opening and shutting the window, enduring all those torments of waiting which make the hours pass so heavily. The great clock of the cathedral was striking ten when I lifted the iron knocker on the Licentiate's door. I had settled with myself that ten should be the decisive hour.

The housekeeper, Doña Gertrude, burst

into tears on seeing me. I addressed the customary condolences to her while making my way to the library. My heart was beating quickly; it was all I could do to preserve my composure. Of course, on finding myself once more in his house, and hearing from his old housekeeper all the details of his illness and death, I thought of my poor friend; but I was chiefly engrossed with the idea of what would be his grief, if it should be given him to see his Gomara fall into unworthy hands. The bequest of his library to the seminary had not surprised me, because Perez possessed a considerable number of theological works; and he was bound to think of the welfare of his soul, and to make sure, by such an act of generosity, of the prayers of the Church. But to leave an *editio princeps* of Gomara to a seminary, for the benefit of young men who could not appreciate such a treasure, would have been a proceeding unworthy of a true philosopher.

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At the threshold of her late master's study the housekeeper paused.

"I could not go in there," said she, her tears starting afresh. "I see my poor master now, seated before his table, reading, writing, and dozing. Do you go in by yourself, doctor; you will find everything just as he left it."

She took her seat on the bench in the anteroom, and handed me a key. I subdued my own feelings, opened the door, and entered the spacious apartment, furnished with folios, in which poor Perez' life had been passed. His oaken armchair, with a cushion of Cordovan leather, stood before the table, on which lay an open book. The *savant* had died at his life-work. My eyes, rapidly accustoming themselves to the semi-darkness, wandered with mingled pleasure, regret, and dread, over the shelves on which the books—some in parchment covers, others bound in morocco and gold—were ranged. An infernal idea crept into my brain. I was

alone; the Gomara was within a few feet of me, in a bookcase, whose glass doors I could discern faintly glistening. What was there to prevent my laying hands on the precious volume? That volume was probably unique; ought I to suffer it to disappear, to be lost for ever? I wanted to bring it to light, to commentate it, make it the subject of my sixty-third treatise addressed to the Academy of Science in Paris, and posterity would approve, would justify my act of larceny. At that moment I would have rejoiced had the "Lobo," with blood-stained sword in hand, stood between me and the tempter-book. I would have fought, I would have allowed myself to be killed, to possess myself of that volume. But to steal it in cold blood! My reason was restored to me. At that moment, for the second time in my life, I recognized the rising up within me of that evil genius—that demon whose existence within us the least severe of philosophers

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have acknowledged — and I despised myself. I say it with humility, my honesty won the victory. I recovered myself, and advanced towards the corner in which the Licentiate kept his choicest editions. I was still ashamed of my momentary impulse; I almost dreaded to find myself face to face with the Gomara. With stealthy steps I drew near the sheltered nook. A cold sweat broke out upon my body, and I involuntarily uttered a piercing cry. The space which ought to have been occupied by the Gomara was empty!

“What is the matter with you, doctor?” cried Doña Gertrude, as she threw the door open and stood in the aperture, making the sign of the cross.

I seized her by the hands, and dragged her to the empty shelf.

“The Gomara?” said I hoarsely.

The poor woman looked at me in alarm.

“Holy Virgin! has my master appeared to you?”

"The Gomara?" I repeated, and began to search the bookcase with eager, trembling hands.

Doña Gertrude wept, and I, choking but tearless, envied her the power to weep. Then I fortunately remembered the Greek saying, "The man who yields to his passions, were it but for an hour, is no longer a man;" and regained the mastery over myself.

"There were some books on that shelf, my good woman," said I to the house-keeper after a long silence; "what has become of them?"

"Only my poor master could tell you that, sir," she replied, with a sorrowful shake of the head; "you are the first who has set foot in this room since he died."

"Will you swear to that?"

"By the corpse of my mother!" was her emphatic answer.

Oblivious of time, and profiting by the fact that in Mexico seals are not placed on the property of the dead, I searched the



Licentiate's library until midnight. Next day, at dawn, I resumed my task. On the third day, feeling quite exhausted, I was taking a little breathing-time, sitting in a poor friend's armchair, when his nephew the curé of a village in the sierra, walked in, accompanied by the house-steward to the seminary, who had been deputed to take possession of the legacy.

I was slightly acquainted with the curé, who had in his hand a thick quarto volume, for which I had been looking in vain. This was the catalogue of Perez' books, drawn up by his own hand. After the usual salutations I begged the good priest to allow me to examine this catalogue, and he at once handed it to me. I turned eagerly to the letter G, and found that the name of Gomara and the historical note relative to the edition of 1552 had been obliterated by broad bars of ink of evidently recent date. There was no longer any doubt. Perez, perhaps for the simple purpose of driving me to despair, had destroyed an almost

unique treasure. And I had believed him to be my friend !

My paleness, and the trembling which shook my whole frame, surprised both the curé and the house-steward, who showed great solicitude about me. When I could speak, I told them of the precious book possessed by Perez, and its disappearance ; but neither of them had any knowledge of it. The curé, however, mentioned that his uncle, shortly before his death, had made him a present of twenty volumes.

“ Gomara, Gomara ? ” he repeated, in a pondering tone. “ Wait a bit. Was it a big book bound in parchment, and printed in illegible Gothic characters ? ”

“ Yes, yes.”

“ All right, then ; it’s at my house. I have no doubt about it. You set a high value on this volume, doctor ? ”

“ Higher than on my life ! ” I imprudently replied.

“ I will not ask a price for it which belongs to God alone,” said the curé, smil-

ing. "My Gomara is yours, doctor; and you must take the trouble to come and fetch it from my house, which you have often promised to visit; and you must send me in exchange one of your own books—one with prints in it."

I promised; and so overjoyed was that I embraced the curé, Doña Gertrud and even the house-steward, after the Mexican fashion.

"Doctor," said the latter, "if you would care to have any of the books that are stored here, they are at your disposal."

I thanked this good fellow, who generously offered me that which did not belong to him; but the spirit of chivalry still survives on the soil of Mexico. In exchange for his kindness, I helped him to pack up the books, which the Indians carried off to the seminary in wicker crates. I could not but suffer on seeing the rough and careless fashion in which those old friends of poor Perez were treated, and was profoundly troubled when I thought

the fate that may befall my own on the day when I shall pay the debt that each man contracts at his birth.

The next day but one, at six o'clock in the evening, the last crate was carried out of the Licentiate's house. I followed the porter to the seminary, wishing to take a last leave of all this wealth of learning, and then I turned away, sick at heart. The contents of the crates had been emptied out on the floor of a great hall, there to lie until there should be leisure and inclination for their arrangement. A magnificent edition of the heroic poem of Girolano Bartolomei, *L'America* (Rome, 1650), lay crushed by *La Historia del Yucatan*, by Fray Diego Lopez Cogolludo (Madrid, 1688). I reproached myself in the name of science for the scruples that had impelled me to reject the generous offer of the house-steward.

I returned to the house to see Perez' nephew, and we agreed to start on the following day. On talking with him I

learned that the Licentiate had made several presents of books to persons living in the town and to lovers of books in Mexico. I wrote down all the names that I could ascertain, even though the particulars supplied to me by the curé left me in no doubt whatever respecting the identity of the Gomara, of which I was so soon to become the fortunate possessor.

I reached my hotel at ten o'clock in such high spirits that I actually hummed a tune. The night was still, hot, and starlit. What could have put such an idea into Perez' head as to bestow the celebrated edition of Gomara upon his nephew, who was not at all remarkable for a love of books? It was plain, to my thinking, that my poor friend had ceased to enjoy the complete use of his faculties, and that God had done well in recalling him to Himself.

I ordered supper before I went up to my room, for during the last few days I had almost forgotten that I was made of flesh and blood. All the visitors to the hotel

were talking of the Tomasi, of her beauty, her grace, and her voice.

Just as I was about to go upstairs, I saw the singer getting out of her carriage; she was coming back from the theatre.

“Ha! is that you, doctor?” said she, taking my arm familiarly. “I thought you had gone back again. Have you turned against me, that you scorn to come and ask for me?”

I stammered out the name of Gomara. We crossed the Moorish corridor which led to the singer's apartments; she walked beside me, erect, light-footed, animated, smiling. I looked at her in astonishment; I could hardly believe that this bright being was the same languid, absent, listless woman whom I had narrowly observed during our momentous journey in each other's company.

She led me into her sitting-room, threw aside her shawl, shook out her hair, which was heavily massed above her forehead, and made me sit down. She talked, she

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laughed, she went in and out of the room, giving orders to her attendants. She lighted a cigar, and flung it away immediately. From time to time her deep searching eyes seemed to hold me with their burning glances, and gave me a very strange sensation. She raised her arms, took hold of her long hair, as if she were about to twist it up, and then shaking her head with a laugh, she flung it rippling in golden curls upon her shoulders. Presently, after having eagerly followed the movement of the hands of the timepiece with her glittering eyes for a few minutes, she went out on the balcony to breathe the air, and kept silence as though listening.

As I contemplated the transformation of the Tomasi, I was reminded of the young tigresses which I had so often seen playing about before their dens in the depths of the jungle. She had the grace, the caprice, the flexibility, the sudden movements, the coquettish ways of those beautiful feline

creatures. Truth to tell, these fascinating ways of hers disturbed my composure not a little. I seemed once more to see, through her rich garments, the supple, undulating form which had stood out in its nude whiteness against the black trunk of the "ahuéhuété." I was just saying to myself that it would be very pleasant to be twenty years old, and to carry off that fair creature in my arms, as Acatl had done, when my attention was distracted by the sight of two magnificent "océotl," or tiger flowers—an orchid described in his *Notes on the Natural History of the West Indies*, by the learned Hernandez d'Oveido, an author who is often confounded by Europeans with his namesake, Doctor Francisco Hernandez.

"You think my flowers beautiful?" said the Tomasi, who had followed the direction of my gaze.

"Yes; and even more rare than beautiful," I replied. "Those flowers will not grow in a hothouse; they are only to be



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met with in the forest of the *Tierra Caliente*, and that by a careful seeker."

The singer took up one of the flowers.

"You think they are rare," said she, holding it up before me, "even here?"

"Especially here, signora. These must have come from the neighbourhood of *Atlisco*, that is to say, twelve leagues from this place."

I went on to explain the botanical properties of the plant; and the singer, after having nibbled the edge of one of the blossoms, placed it in her bosom. She had approached the balcony again, and was looking towards the *Istaccihuatl*. I suddenly left off speaking.

"What's the matter, doctor?" said she, resting her fair head against my shoulder.

"Upon my honour, I could swear—I could affirm—"

"What?"

"That the horseman who has just passed by in the guise of an honest *ranchero* is no other than *Acatl*."

She leaned more closely against me; her bright, upturned face was suffused with a lovely colour. She laughed as she tapped me on the cheek with the flower, nibbled it again, and, still laughing, dismissed me.

I was preparing for my welcome bed, when a voice, the most magnificent it has ever been given me to hear, broke upon my ear in delicious strains. I fell asleep while reflecting that Perez, if he were now in Paradise, as no one who knew what the excellence of his life had been could doubt that he was, must be very happy with a concert of the same kind every day.


## CHAPTER VI.

THREE weeks after my departure from Orizava, I, being then in a feverish and despondent mood, beheld the domes of Puebla rising before my dissatisfied eyes. I was advancing towards that city as rapidly as the perversity of the mule which Perez' nephew had placed at my disposal would permit. I was profoundly wretched; and and I was also feeling ill. My moral lassitude was more oppressive than my physical ailments. I was suffering from a cruel disappointment, and the future seemed utterly hopeless.

The parish of which Perez' nephew is the curé is situated at two days' journey from Puebla, in the heart of the mountains which bound the horizon of the City of

the Angels, and is held to be one of the most picturesque spots in all Mexico. I had long regarded it as a God-forgotten place; and I now frankly acknowledge my error.

The curé of Otitlan was a very honest fellow—frank, loyal, and hospitable. I felt deeply indebted to him for his generosity, and during the two days' journey which brought us to his home I made myself as amiable as possible. It was night when we came within sight of his village; and twenty Indians carrying resinous torches saluted my arrival with a display of fireworks, which did frighten my horse, and might have cost me my life, for I tumbled off the terrified animal, or, rather, he jumped from under me. Fortunately I fell on my back, and escaped with a severe bruise. Immediately on our arrival at the curé's house, his housekeeper proposed to apply remedies to my hurts; but I begged to be shown the Gomara as the only remedy I required.



“With your leave, we will put that off until to-morrow,” said the good curé, kindly pressing my hand. “Have patience, doctor ; the book is yours, all yours ; let my assurance satisfy you. There are strong points of resemblance between you and my poor uncle. If you once get hold of the volume, you will shut yourself up to read it, you will forget to eat or drink, and I shall lose the pleasure and profit of your conversation. Now I do not bargain for that.”

I disclaimed, I protested, I offered, under penalty of an oath, not to open the volume except to read the title-page, and then to pack it up. All was in vain.

The next day my bruises kept me in bed until ten o'clock, when a capital breakfast revived me considerably. After that I had to visit a waterfall, a farm, the church, and some sick people. I would have visited the lower regions to make myself agreeable to my host, but the fact was that his tardiness about fulfilling his promise in-

flicted upon me one of the severest trials I have ever sustained in my life ; the recollection of it exasperates me even now. At length evening came, and dinner also, and the curé called for a bottle of Amontillado. With his own hands he uncorked the dusty bottle of generous wine, and when he had filled the glasses he made a sign to the sacristan, who went out. Immediately after, the sounds of a harp, two mandolines, and a flute were heard, as a young Indian girl, in her national costume, entered the room and placed before me a large folio volume wrapped in an embroidered napkin. The glasses were emptied ; I gave the musicians a handful of piastres, and the Indian girl a kiss ; I pressed the hands of my host with tears in my eyes ; then I tremblingly unfolded the napkin. There was no need to open the book ; I could recognize it without troubling myself to do that : it was the Antwerp edition of Gomara, the same which was sown broadcast over the old world and the new !

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I kept silence for a long time, for I felt as if I were going to have a stroke of apoplexy. By degrees the horrible spasm of suffocation passed off, and I explained my sad disappointment to my host. Impossible to make him understand! I wanted a Gomara; he had got me one, and he was astonished to see me thus upset and dismayed. In spite of his entreaties, I set off on the following day for Puebla. I was impatient to begin my search. I was enraged with myself for my own credulity. How could I have believed that Perez, who was a man of sense, would have bestowed an almost unique book upon his nephew? I was a fool to credit such a thing for a moment.

The sun was on the verge of the horizon; the wind had raised the dust, and it was whirling round me; the soil on which I trod was adorned with nothing more lovely than occasional tufts of seeding thistles. I had just passed by a place where four roads met, when I heard a horse's gallop

behind me. I looked round, and pulled up my mule. A young woman, in attire half-Mexican, half European, and splendidly mounted, came towards me at a rapid pace.

"Is it your Gomara that you are looking for on this plain?" asked the harmonious voice of the Tomasi, as she reined-in her fiery steed alongside of me.

"Yes," I answered, in a piteous tone.

"Are you ill?" she continued, looking at me with interest and commiseration.

"I am very tired," I replied. "But how is it that you venture out on this road all alone, at the risk of tempting the brigands who infest it by the diamonds I see glistening in your ears?"

"I am learning to tame horses," said she, with a laugh.

I was about to tell her the sad story of my journey and my disappointment, when the bells of the old Gothic cathedral of Puebla rang out the Angelus.

"Good-bye, good-bye!" cried the To-



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masi. "I sing to-night, and I am late already."

She touched her horse with her whip and the noble animal darted off at a fast gallop. I tried to follow her; but the curé's mule, far from displaying increased animation under the persuasions of my whip, bent back his ears and prepared to lie down. I respected his habits, and desisted. The sun set, and it was not until long after dark that I stretched my weary limbs upon the hard mattress laid upon an iron framework which they call a bed at the Puebla Hotel.

For a whole week I hunted in every corner of the town; I went from house to house, and searched every library in the place. I passed through all the phases of hope; I drank the very dregs of disappointment. All those persons to whom the Licentiate had given books were eager to show his gifts to me; but question, explain, describe as I might, not one of them

knew what I meant when I talked of the Gomara of Millan (Saragossa, 1552).

One evening, when I was coming back to the hotel earlier than usual, very tired and harassed, and thinking of starting for Mexico—I had written out a list of Perez' friends in that city—the Tomasi espied me from her balcony, and beckoned me to come up to her.

"You are killing yourself by inches, doctor," said she, taking me by both hands. "Is it this wretched book that you still have in your head?"

"Yes, always," I replied dejectedly.

"Come, come, you really must not think of it any more. You must divert your mind, and wait for fortune instead of seeking it. Don't you know it sometimes comes while one is asleep?"

"Fortune—yes," replied I; "but books—no."

"By-the-bye, doctor, in which of my rôles do you like me best?"

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I was so plainly embarrassed by this question that the Tomasi could not refrain from laughter ; while I awkwardly confessed that, as I had no hope of finding the Gomara in the orchestra-stalls of a theatre, I had neglected to go to the opera.

“ Do you hate music, then ? ”

“ On the contrary, I love music.”

“ Then come and hear me this evening. You must,” added the wilful creature, as she saw I was about to excuse myself. “ You shall sup with me afterwards. Now go and put your cravat straight.”

That evening I heard the Tomasi in the *rôle* of Lucia, and ever since I have avoided hearing any other singer in that opera, so that I may preserve the recollection of her voice undisturbed. Sitting just behind me, in her box, were the two Italians in whose company I had travelled on the imperial of the Orizava diligence. They were not acting that night, and so they were applauding loudly, like sound connoisseurs in music as they were.

"Well, Fanti, do you remember my predictions?"

"I acknowledge that a transformation has taken place in her. Just listen to that! It is art in all its perfection. And you persist in believing that she is in love."

"Of course I do. Do you not feel it in every note that she shakes out of her throat?"

"But who is the man? With the exception of Count Moro, I don't see—"

"Oh, what matter! Who knows and who cares?"

The house thrilled with enthusiasm, and as for myself, I must confess that the hours which I passed in listening to the Tomasi were the only ones, during the whole of my absence from home, in which I completely forgot the Gomara. All at once, as I was glancing round the house, I observed with surprise, which made it difficult for me to restrain an exclamation, Acatl, standing with his back against a pillar, his eyes fixed, absorbed, lost in con-

templating the singer. The feelings which he was experiencing were easily to be read in the strongly expressive features of his wild passionate face. A conviction darted into my mind that the unfortunate man loved this woman, this queen of art, who was so widely and absolutely separated from him. He was risking his life to see and hear her, for a price was set upon his head. I could not help admiring his daring; for he might be recognized and massacred at any moment. He was applauding vehemently. The sight of him spoiled my pleasure for the rest of the evening.

The Tomasi insisted on taking me back to the hotel; and just as I stepped into the carriage, a bouquet of tiger flowers was thrown into her lap. She bowed her head towards the carriage-window on the right, and we started. I thought it better to say nothing about the presence of Acatl at the theatre; the mention of him would have revived a painful recollection in the singer's mind. She was strangely absent,

hardly spoke a word during our ten minutes' drive, and when we reached the hotel went up to her room. She seemed feverish; a fierce light burned in her eyes; her gestures had lost the supple freedom which I had admired a few days before. I bowed, and was about to retire.

"You sup with me," said she abruptly; "have you forgotten?"

I bowed once more, and she drew near the balcony.

"Why don't you talk?" she said. "Talk to me, then. Tell me about the Greeks and the Latins; about flowers, about Gomara, anything you please, in fact, so that you will only talk."

She walked to and fro, and then she sat down, hid her face in her hands, and remained for some time quite motionless. I was hurt by her manner, and determined to take my leave, and retire. I was advancing towards her with this purpose, when she suddenly sprang to the balcony. For a few moments, while the gallop of a

horse broke the silence of the night, she breathed deeply; then turning to me, with a bright and smiling face, she took my arm, and guided me towards the room in which the supper was laid.

“Forgive me!” said she, in her sweet musical tones. “I am the fairy Fantasia doctor,! You know that, don’t you?”

I was quite fascinated by the charm of her manner, and I answered,—

“You are Euterpe.”

While we were at supper I explained to her that the name of the goddess of music belongs equally to a superb butterfly and to a graceful palm-tree with a flexible stem. She rapped my fingers with her fan to reward me for this information, and laughed merrily, as she said,—

“O you *savants*, how many things you can say in one word!”

## CHAPTER VII.

I DID not wake until late next morning ; and while dressing, I considered the feasibility of subjecting Doña Gertrude to a fresh cross-examination, and I also meditated on the talent and ready wit of the Tomasi. She had actually led me into telling her all about my youthful love affairs, while we were at supper on the previous evening ; and the recollections which she had aroused in me rendered me somewhat pensive. I had allowed myself to slide down the groove of memory in the presence of my complacent hearer. There had, indeed, been just a little mockery in the laughter, the questions, the remarks of the beautiful singer ; but, for all that, she



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had pressed my hands two or three times over with such genuine emotion that I could not feel any resentment on that account. Just as I was coming out of my room, I met her in the corridor.

"I thought you were an early riser, doctor," said she, in a reproachful tone. "I have been waiting for you ever since daybreak."

"It is hardly eight o'clock yet."

"What matter? You know the governor of the town, General Traconis?"

"I do slightly."

"He holds you in the same esteem with which every one regards you in this country, where your name is a talisman. I have observed that fact several times."

"I have passed thirty years in trying to do good among the people, madame, and they like me."

"Doctor, will you take me to see the general?"

"With pleasure; but I must make my apology for not having paid him a visit

during the three weeks which I have passed at Puebla."

"Very well, then ; you can talk to him about your Gomara. He commands the police force, and his scouts may be of use to you in your search."

This idea struck me as being ingenious.

The Tomasi dressed herself quickly, and we set out on foot. Every one we met, both men and women, turned to look at us, and saluted us as we went along.

"By-the-bye," said I to my companion, "what are we going to see General Tracónis for ?"

"We are going to ask him for a pardon for the Lobo," replied the Tomasi calmly.

I looked at her in astonishment.

"He saved me from horrible outrage—I owe my life to him ; and, indeed, he saved yours—a little. Don't you think we have been rather ungrateful, doctor ? A price is set upon his head, and it is for us, who are under such obligation to him, to obtain his pardon. The story you told

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me yesterday inspired me with the idea of taking this step."

I said something which implied asceticism, but I did not in the least understand what the history of a wild and foolish passion of my youth had in common with the pardon of a rascally brigand. However, the penalty of death is a great pain and an offence to me, and I have always begged for reprieve for the condemned, systematically and on principle.

We were admitted at once to the presence of General Traconis. He was a handsome man, and a perfect gentleman. He appeared to be much pleased by the Tomasi's visit; he did not disguise his admiration of her marvellous beauty, and he paid her elegantly-turned compliments upon her voice and her acting, accompanying them with liberal offers of his services.

Plainly, briefly, and forcibly the Tomasi set forth her petition. The general heard her with a troubled countenance, and made answer thus :—

“ Only yesterday I should have had no hesitation in granting your request, signora; to-day what you ask is no longer in my power.”

He took a paper from his writing-table and handed it to the singer. She glanced at it, and turned pale. It was an order from Juarez to capture the Lobo and his band at any cost. The daring brigand had just made a descent upon a convoy of treasure belonging to the English Government, and carried off the chests; two officers had been killed, and the ambassador demanded justice.

The Tomasi, by turns humble and imploring, or haughty and imperious, entreated, argued, supplicated. I added my prayers to hers. The general, while protesting that he ardently desired to grant our request, pleaded the formal order which he had just received. He would shut his eyes, he would take no measures against the Lobo, he would allow him to escape; but as for granting him a safe-

conduct—an *indulto*—as we demanded of him, the thing was impossible. He even offered to write to Mexico in his own name, in the Tomasi's, in mine ; but beyond this he could not go. There was nothing to be done ; we had to withdraw.

The Tomasi did not utter one word as we walked back to the hotel ; but her hurried step, and the nervous movement of the arm with which she held mine, betrayed her grief, anger, and mortification.

“Your governor is an ugly idiot,” she exclaimed, flinging herself on the couch in the salon ; “and I could not perceive, doctor, that he held you in the smallest consideration. In my own country the favour I asked would have been granted instantly ; but there's the smell of the savage about this place. The Lobo has not killed either his father or his mother that I am aware of ; he has killed a man ! Well, and have not I myself wanted to kill a man ?”


She stood up, shuddering all over her

body; and seizing a pretty little riding-whip, which lay upon a table, she began to strike wildly at the furniture, pictures, clocks, and ornaments. She raged about the room like a fury, breaking and destroying everything. This time it was no longer a tigress at play, bounding in the sunshine, that I had before my eyes; it was a furious wild beast, mad with the thirst of blood, but superbly beautiful in her terrible rage. I admired her in silence, until at last she grew tired of breaking the things in the room and pouring out a torrent of bad language, and once more flung herself upon the couch in an agony of tears. Then I discreetly retired, and betook myself to poor Perez' house.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon, as I was returning to the hotel in a pensive mood—I had obtained some information about the Gomara which had led me to decide on starting for Mexico that same evening—the Tomasi passed me on horseback. She was alone, as usual, and wore

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a black cloth riding-habit ; her golden hair escaped in burnished curls from her broad-brimmed hat, adorned with scarlet plumes. So beautiful and graceful was she that the very Indians themselves turned and gazed after her. She saw me, saluted me with a friendly wave of the hand, and seemed as though she were about to stop and speak to me ; but she changed her mind, and touching her horse with the spur, disappeared. At seven o'clock there was a great commotion among the Italian company : the singer had not returned ; and horses were saddled for the men of the party, who were about to go in search of her. At ten the diligence from Vera Cruz arrived ; and the women assembled in the courtyard had to retire before the passengers could get out of the vehicle, for they had all been robbed on the road, and were nearly naked. At midnight, just as I was getting into the diligence for Mexico, one of the Italians returned, in great consternation, and announced that the dead



body of the Tomasi had been found on the Amozoc road. The poor young woman had probably fallen a victim to the brigand for whom she had so generously pleaded that very morning.

I had time to learn only a very few details before the diligence carried me away from Puebla. I was completely overcome by this intelligence, and a tear would persist in standing in each eye as I thought of the hard fate of the beautiful young woman into whose company destiny had thrown me, and in whom I had felt a keen interest. So much grace, beauty, talent, wit, and youth annihilated in a moment by the brutal hand of an Apache! My philosophy was disturbed, and sleep was driven away from me.

The sun rose. By degrees I came back to a more sober frame of mind, a more just appreciation of things. We were within a short distance of Mexico, where I was about to make a supreme effort to recover the *editio princeps* of Gomara, and I en-



deavoured to shake off my depression, for I felt that I should need all my mental resources.

I agreed with myself that while there were in the world several thousands of young women ready to replace the Tomasi, there were at most only three or four copies of the Gomara of 1552 in existence. But it was all in vain. I verily believe that I would have basely renounced the priceless treasure of the *editio princeps*, if thereby I could have restored life to that magnificent form, which my memory showed me, bound to the *ahuéhuété*, so plainly that the tears which had been standing so long in my eyes fell from them just as the diligence entered the city of Mexico.

## CHAPTER VIII.

I REMAINED at Mexico for a month, going to bed late, getting up early, and returning every evening to my hotel worn out with fatigue, and in despair. Not a trace of the Gomara could I find among Perez' friends; in vain did I question them; not one had heard the Licentiate speak of his precious copy, and some among them had talked with him less than a month before his death. The Gomara had been destroyed. I was always saying to myself that there was no good in thinking about it any more, and yet I could think of nothing else.

At length, not having any one else of whom to inquire, I resolved to return to Orizava, where my patients wanted me

badly. I departed very sadly from the ancient capital of the Aztec empire. Did I not leave hope behind me there? At Puebla I wasted four days. It needed a still stronger effort of the will to quit the City of the Angels than that by which I had torn myself away from Mexico. Like Cortez, I was burning my boats. I found that I was the only inside passenger of the diligence; on the imperial were three Americans, armed with revolvers, swords, and life-preservers. They informed me that they would defend me in case of an attack by brigands. I did not know until afterwards that they were bringing a valuable collection of emeralds down with them.

In passing through Puebla, I had seen the servants of the poor Tomasi; they persisted in expecting her return. Doubts had arisen concerning the identity of the corpse that had been found on the Amozoc road; but one fact was certain—the singer had given no sign of life. I took care not to

undecieve the poor waiting-women; time would do that soon enough.

For two months past I had been constantly in the habit of cursing poor Perez, and now I was seized with remorse; so I thought I would make a little pilgrimage to his resting-place, as an atonement for the many imprecations that had been wrung from me by my disappointment. The grass was already long upon the grave of my poor friend. *Requiescat in pace*, as the letter of announcement said; but how fast the grass grows!

Amozoc was left behind us, and the diligence was rapidly nearing the place at which I had had so narrow an escape from death on my way to Puebla. Leaning back in my seat, with closed eyes I was passing all the incidents of my journey in review, and just reflecting upon the strange humours of the Tomasi—how she was by turns ardent, languid, imperious, active, indolent, impulsive; in short, of a nervous temperament—when the sudden whistling of bullets

past my ears interrupted my thoughts. I opened my eyes, and there were my three Americans returning the fire of three brigands posted by the roadside. One of the horsemen dropped; a second, hit in the chest, fell backward on his horse's croup, and was carried into the wood; the third fled.

The Americans went on firing, although our assailants had disappeared. The first volley by the brigands had made havoc with our team, and the driver was taking the harness off the dead mules. My defenders, looking rather pale, stood behind the diligence, each with a finger on the trigger of his pistol, keeping watch on the edge of the wood. I got out, and ran to the man who lay on the grass. He was dead, and, on removing the black mask which hid his face, I recognized him as one of my former patients at Orizava. This poor fellow had a wife and children. I stripped him of his watch and his money, in order to secure them for his widow.

Then I went on into the wood to look after the wounded man. The Americans, apparently surprised at my doing so, shouted to me to come back.

“You, gentlemen,” I replied, “have done your duty as men; let me do mine as a doctor.”

And holding up my arms, as a sign to whomsoever I might meet that my intentions were not hostile, I went on my way, and I soon came up with the dead man's horse. The animal trotted on, stopping occasionally to graze for a moment. I followed it, listening and calling. Presently I heard a groan and an exclamation; the sounds proceeded from the left. I turned in that direction, repeating, in every variety of tone, the word “Friend!” and I soon caught sight of a woman, kneeling. She rose as I approached her, and, to my profound amazement, I recognized the Tomasi.

She came towards me, looking fixedly in my face. She wore a dress of blue cloth

ornamented with gold lace, and she was exceedingly beautiful.

"You, you!" she cried, and threw herself into my arms. In vain she strove to speak, her sobs choked her; but turning suddenly from me into the wood, she signed to me to follow her. I did so, but my step was not so light as hers; and when I came up with her she was supporting on her knees the head of a man who lay stretched on the earth. The man was the Lobo.

"Save him!" said she, in a hoarse tone; and she stretched out her clasped hands with a piteous gesture of entreaty.

I bent over the poor wretch, who was breathing with difficulty.

"The emeralds—for her—" he muttered; then pulled me towards him with a convulsive effort, sighed heavily, and expired.

"Save him, save him!" repeated the singer.

Knowing her horror of corpses, I shook

my head mournfully, to convey the truth to her, and of course I expected that she would jump up and rush away with horror. But, as if she had not understood me, she folded her fair arms around the dead Indian, soiling her hands with the blood from the gaping wound in his breast.

“He is dead—he is dead, I tell you,” said I; “come away!”

She rose, looked me in the face, repeated the word “Dead!” as though she were trying to guess its meaning, and fell forward in the swoon which I had been expecting. I placed myself so that she should not see the corpse on recovering her senses. After a while she opened her eyes, and again looked at me with a fixed stare.

“Come away!” I said persuasively, and helped her to rise. She took my arm, and accompanied me mechanically. I was much moved by the state in which I found the unfortunate young woman, but I did not venture to question her. On the verge of the wood we came upon the body of the



brigand who had been shot dead, and she knelt down by the side of the corpse, and again almost swooned. By the help of the driver and his "zagal," I placed her in the diligence. The Americans overwhelmed me with questions, which I had neither leisure nor inclination to answer. One of them handed me his drinking-flask, and we resumed our journey. When we stopped to change the team, my patient seemed to be asleep; she had opened her eyes for a moment, but only to settle her head upon my knees and reclose them. She was apparently insensible to the jolting of the vehicle; her slumber was heavy and troubled. It was evident that since the disappearance of the unfortunate creature she had been kept a prisoner by the brigands, of whom nothing had been heard in the interval. What might she not have suffered? I was eager for her to wake; I wanted to hear her speak; I feared for her reason, for I could not be certain that she had recognized me.

Shortly before we reached San Agostino she opened her eyes.

“Good-day, doctor,” said she, after she had scrutinized me curiously for a few moments. “How comes it that I am lying on your knees, if you please? Why am I in a carriage, and where are we going to?”

I told her exactly all that had taken place, every particular of the occurrences that had led to her liberation. She listened with attention, [and burst into tears; this I regarded as a favourable crisis. I spoke to her as one would speak to an essentially sensitive being—as I should have spoken to a child. We were just arriving at San Agostino, and I asked her whether she would not like to stop there, and return to Puebla, whither I offered to escort her. She only shook her head negatively, and said, “Take me with you.” After that she was quite silent.

At San Agostino I made her get out of the diligence and walk about a little. It

got known through the driver—for he had recognized her—that I was bringing back the Tomasi, whose disappearance had created such a sensation, and a curious crowd was speedily collected about the vehicle. The Americans, very proud of their achievements, exhibited their weapons to the bystanders, and one of them boasted that it was he who had hit the Lobo.

The Tomasi was listening to him with dilated nostrils, compressed lips, and fiery eyes. He approached us, but she dragged me roughly away from the spot. We set out again. The singer ensconced herself in a corner of the vehicle, and made me no answer when the sound of her stifled sobs impelled me to address her. When we reached Orizava I could hardly arouse her; she was burning and shivering in a high fever. To leave her at the hotel would have been cruelty. I took her to my own house, and for four days I despaired of her life. At length, after I had watched many nights by her bedside,

assisted by her attendants, who had come on at once from Puebla, I had the consolation of pronouncing her out of danger. I never alluded to her captivity, except incidentally, and then she sobbed, smiled, pressed my hand, and turned away her head. So soon as she could walk she insisted on returning to Europe; and as I expected that the sea air would perfect her recovery, I sent her off in a litter, under the escort of four men on whom I could thoroughly rely. She reached Vera Cruz in safety.

In the evening, after she was gone, I resumed possession of myself, so to speak, and for the first time since my return I sat quietly down in my study. I was feeling sad and weary as I thought over the whole succession of adventures through which I had passed, retracing, as it were, the windings of the maze from which I had at length emerged. My spirits rose as I looked around at the familiar objects and the well-known walls.

The place reserved among my books for the Gomara, was, alas, empty, but I resolved to combat my disappointment by resuming my labours. I determined to proceed at once with my essay upon the probable food of the megatherium, and to resume my researches into the *Theobroma cacao* of Linnæus.

While these wise resolutions were forming themselves in my mind, my eyes fell on a small wooden box placed on the floor under a table. I thought I recognized the mark of my friend Sumichrast upon the lid, and, concluding that the box contained some archæological curiosities, I set it on the table and proceeded to unpack it. I carefully removed ten layers of cotton wool, and from underneath them I brought to light— What? *The Gomara of Millan, Saragossa, 1552, editio princeps*; a legacy which my friend Perez had intrusted to Porfirio Diaz, the master-muleteer, to be safely delivered to me, and which had left Puebla on the very day of my arrival there!

Dear and worthy Perez! And I had doubted his friendship; I had misjudged that great soul! How amply he was avenged!

I had been mistaken when I told the Tomasi that only fortune, not books, came to the sleeper. Poor young woman! Long after she was gone back to Europe it was said and believed in Mexico that, having fallen in love with the Lobo, she had gone off and lived with him in the mountains. All those who shall read my memoirs in the future will know how much credit to attach to that foolish rumour; for who can certify to its utter falsehood, if not I?

As for the *editio princeps* of Gomara, I bequeath it to my natal city, Strasburg, together with all my collections, which, after my death, are to be transported to the old capital of Alsace, when that province shall once more form a portion of France.

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DONA EVORNIA.


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## CHAPTER I.

It was just three months after my victorious controversy with Professor Wilhelm Bis-lügen, who had daringly affirmed that Charlemagne, son of Pepin the Short, and grandson of Charles Martel, was a German, that my old patient Vivanco took it into his head to celebrate the anniversary of my birth—the 21st of June, 1802. He asked me to dinner, and I accepted his invitation without thinking of the date. Simultaneously with the dessert appeared the three children of my host—I had saved the life of the eldest in inflammation of the lungs, cured the second of whooping-cough, and set a broken arm for the third—all three carried enormous bouquets ; and the youngest child recited, in a treble tone,



some verses composed for the occasion by the curé who was one of the guests.

Compliments of this kind are not among the national customs of Mexico; but Vivanco had heard me speak of the family festivals of my own country, and he thought it would cheer me up to witness an imitation of them. He was right; when I heard the three children call me in the curé's homely rhymes their second father, their saviour, their friend, I could not restrain my tears. My father, my mother, my childhood, my native land, my exiled condition, all passed before my mind's eye. Vivanco was quite taken aback, and reproached himself for what he had done; his wife wept, the curé did likewise, and presently the children joined in with ready sympathetic sobs.

"It is for joy that I am crying," said I, when I could speak, clasping the dear little ones in my arms. And then I laughed to their hearts' content, embraced Madame Vivanco—she was a very handsome woman

—drank a large glass of sherry to the health of my kind entertainers, and wiped my spectacles.

At eleven o'clock they were obliged literally to turn me out of doors. I had been talking of Alsace, of the hopping festival, and of my mother—all inexhaustible subjects. I escorted the curé to his house; and as we had both been very convivial, we fell to discussing the creation of the world, and I entered upon a scientific examination of the double question of the Deluge and pre-Adamite man.

“What have we got to do with all that?” said the good old priest; “how could the solution of those problems change that which exists? Ah, doctor, why is it that men strive so passionately for vain things, but take so little pains to secure their true welfare?”

Thereupon we bade each other good-night, and parted. The air was mild; the breeze, blowing across the orange-groves of Barrio-Nuevo, bore their perfume on its

wings. The great black peak of Orizava cast its shadow on the city which lay sleeping at its foot. The dark-blue sky was thick set with stars, crowded together, scintillating, innumerable—satellites, planets, comets, or suns. Gazing upwards at these wonders; thinking of time, of space, of matter, of motion, phenomena which set limits to all philosophies; and then reflecting that the living beings who people this planet might disappear without effecting the smallest alteration in the force that governs the others, I found myself repeating the words of the curé.

As I approached my own dwelling I found three or four persons assembled in front of my door, and plying the knocker by turns with great vehemence. The neighbours, aroused by the uproar, appeared at their windows. I hurried onwards, foreboding that my night's rest was to be postponed to the advent of some interesting little stranger or other.

“At last! God be praised, doctor!”

exclaimed one of my ill-timed visitors as I drew near. "Come at once! Don Félipé Acéval has just been assassinated!"

"Don Félipé Acéval! You are dreaming!"

"Alas, no! Indeed, it is too true! Quick, doctor, quick!"

I hurried off at once, outstripping those who had come for me. I felt quite bewildered. Félipé Acéval dead, murdered! How? Where? By whom? As I turned the corner of the Calle de las Senoras I came upon four night-watchmen, who were holding up their lanterns over a pool of blood already clotted.

"What a dreadful deed, doctor!" said a police-officer, as I stopped to glance at the ghastly token of the crime. "You can do nothing. The blow was mortal."

"Who dealt it?"

"Ah, that is what we are trying to discover."

I entered the dwelling of the victim. In accordance with the superstitious usage of

the country, the body, covered with a cloak, had been laid across the threshold of the murdered man's chamber. I called for lights; and then, with the aid of a neighbour, I placed Félipé upon his bed, and cut his clothes open so as to remove them with the least possible loss of time. Just as in the case of the son of old Toribio, who had been killed a year before, I discovered a deep wound under the left breast. The police-officer was right; Félipé was dead—stone dead.

“We must make the *post-mortem* at once, doctor,” said the alcalde, who had just arrived.

With my own hands I decently arranged the corpse upon the stretcher on which it was to be conveyed to the amphitheatre of the hospital, and then I asked where Doña Evornia was.

“In her room,” answered the waiting-woman. “Ah, doctor, it was she herself who opened the door and received the master when they brought him back dead.”

“Did she faint?”

“No; she rushed away to her room; and there she is—neither speaking, answering, nor crying. She frightens me.”

I went into the room towards which the speaker pointed, and which was dimly lighted by the floating wick of an oil-lamp placed in front of a statue of our Lady. Evornia was dressed, like all the ladies of her country when indoors, in an embroidered chemise and a white skirt bound at the waist by a sash of red China crape. She was sitting on the side of her bed; her eyes were closed, her bosom was half naked, and a little infant was sucking greedily at her left breast. Doña Evornia was considered to be the handsomest woman in Orizava. She was short, slight, exquisitely proportioned, and very fair. I had known her ever since her birth. Her father's house adjoined mine; and for many years the child had been in the habit of coming every day to admire my birds, my insects, my quadrupeds, my plants, my



old curiosities, and especially my reptiles, which I kept in a collection apart from the other contents of my museum. I had entirely approved of her marriage with Félipé Acéval; it was a love-match. The happiness of the handsome, rich, charitable young couple who were universally beloved, had been completed by the birth of a son; and now the husband was dead at twenty-six years old, and the wife, not yet eighteen, was a widow.

An old woman, a neighbour, kneeling on the floor at a little distance from Evornia, was repeating prayers in an undertone.

“My child, my poor child!” said I, as I advanced towards the stricken young creature.

The sound of my voice aroused her, and she stood up. Great blood stains spotted her white dress. Her blue eyes—usually so sweet, so tender, so dreamy—glittered with a hard proud light, as she turned their questioning glance upon me, with the words:—

“He is dead?”

I made an affirmative sign. She threw back her head, and shuddered; then, laying the infant, now sleeping, on the bed, she seated herself in a chair, with her hands clenched upon the arms. I said a few words to her, but she did not seem to hear them. Neither was she aware that her bosom was still uncovered. The alcalde presented himself; and when her waiting-woman pronounced the magistrate's name, Evornia turned abruptly towards me, hid her face on my shoulder, and strained me convulsively in her arms.

“The criminal shall be found and punished, señora,” said the alcalde, in his grave tones. “I solemnly pledge my word to you for that. Can you give us no information which may aid justice?”

“None.”

“Do you not suspect any one?”

She stepped back, seemed to be about to speak, looked downwards, and perceiving the blood-spots on her dress,

again shrank cowering into my arms, and said,—

“No one.”

The alcalde bowed, and withdrew. He was hardly out of sight before Evornia reseated herself in the armchair, and resumed her former motionless silence.

I left her to the care of the women. This mute and concentrated grief made me uneasy; and yet I knew very well how virile and dauntless a spirit that fragile, refined, lovely frame enshrined.

## CHAPTER II.

AT six next morning I was informed that Evornia had violated the ancient usages of the country by sending away the neighbours who had come to condole with her, after my departure. This conduct on the part of the young widow had given some scandal in the town; and, in addition, it was stated by the watchman of the square that Evornia had come to the window, and stood gazing at the spot on which her husband had been slain. This double disregard of Mexican usages seemed to have already deprived her of the public sympathy.

“That woman has not the soul of a Christian,” said one of my elderly patients, who informed me of these facts.

Alas, Evornia was young and beautiful; and it was therefore, in my belief, that the persons of her own sex failed in indulgence for her. At eight an alguazil brought me an order, signed by the chief alcalde, who was the president of the municipal council, "to proceed, without delays or excuses of any kind whatever to the autopsy of the corpse of Don Félipé Acéval, who met his death by accident on the night of the 21st of June, 1848." When I entered the amphitheatre the two house-surgeons were already at their posts, and presently arrived the "régidor," an officer of police, whose presence on the occasion of a judicial autopsy is required by the law. The poor man seemed very uncomfortable; he looked timidly at the corpse, and watched my preparations with evident repugnance.

The features of the dead man were not contracted; he looked as though he were fast asleep. According to the evidence, he had been found lying on his face on

the footpath. There was no trace of a struggle, and a close examination proved that the murder had not been the result of an intention to rob Don Félipé. He must have advanced to meet his assassin without any mistrust.

The wound, five centimètres in width, was situated between the sixth and seventh ribs, on the left side. I came to the conclusion that it had been inflicted by one of those knives, sharpened on both sides of the blade, which are used by the workmen in the tobacco factories. The probe revealed a depth of eight centimètres; the blade had been driven in obliquely from beneath, upward. The murderer was therefore, in all probability, of shorter stature than his victim. One peculiarity struck me: the wound was of uniform width throughout its entire depth; the knife which had been used must therefore have been a new one; for those of the workmen, being constantly sharpened, soon become worn at the edges. On the

body, which I minutely examined, there was not even the slightest bruise.

The heart—that phenomenon which is the despair of the physiologist—must have been struck towards the right auricle. Just as I was sawing through the ribs, so as to lay bare the cavity of the chest, the sound of a heavy body striking the ground attracted my attention. The “régidor,” of whom nobody was thinking, had fainted, and fallen off his bench. We carried him into the garden, and he came to himself almost immediately.

“He cried out, doctor, didn’t he?” said the poor man, who was trembling all over.

“He? Who?”

“He, the dead man.”

I could not refrain from smiling, as I reassured the good “régidor,” who, though still very pale, declared that he had seen many another autopsy besides this one.

“Only, doctor,” he added, “I happen to have eaten nothing this morning.”

At that moment an attendant brought each of us a cup of chocolate and a roll, refreshments to which all persons on the hospital staff are entitled. The "régidor" tried to drink his chocolate, but, to the great amusement of my two assistants, he could not swallow a single mouthful. I begged him to go out and sit in the vestibule; and he assented, while assuring me anew that he had seen several *post-mortems*.

I had not been mistaken; Félipé's heart, pierced through, must have ceased to beat instantly. I had completed my observations, and drawn up my report, when the Government Prosecutor came in. According to information received, Don Félipé had been stabbed after leaving the house of a young woman who was called "the Greek" by the people of the town. "The Greek," a patient of mine, was a handsome woman, of somewhat light conduct, so it was said at least. Her beauty and her liveliness attracted a number of



young men to her house, where dancing and card-playing were to be enjoyed, and every one made it a great point to please the fair hostess. The mother of the Greek was a wrinkled old Indian, who could hardly speak Spanish. Before his marriage, Don Félipé had been an admirer of the handsome foreigner—she was said to have come from Guadalajara—and he was, indeed, believed to have been her lover.

The Greek—she was indebted for the name to the harmonious regularity of her features—had been unable to conceal her anger and mortification at Don Félipé's marriage. Several witnesses had heard her say, "I will kill him;" and during a whole month she had closed her doors, renounced all festivals, horse-races, and bullfights, and frequented the churches. The conversion was a mock one; by degrees the Greek resumed her former life of pleasure. It was she whom the Government Prosecutor suspected of the murder. It was proved that for more than fifteen

days past Félipé had constantly visited his former mistress, and that he had even passed the hours immediately preceding his death with her.

“But Valentine Solar has been the Greek’s favourite for ever so long,” I remarked to the Prosecutor; “he is actually said to be intending to marry her. You were aware of these details, were you not?”

“Yes, I know about them; but I also know that Valentine has all along been the rival of Félipé, and that they were enemies.”

“But they were on speaking terms. Valentine is a brave and honest fellow, capable of a weakness, but incapable of a cowardly action.”

“If you had ever been in love, doctor, I would just ask you to think of the beauty, the grace, and the charm of the Greek, as they call her, and then to put this question to yourself—from what folly, from what crime to which such a siren had urged

you, would you have shrunk at twenty years of age?"

"I have a heart, and I have loved, señor," I replied, with emotion; "but the smile of the loveliest woman in the world, had she the breast of Helen, the divine form of Phryne, the charm of Cleopatra, or the majestic bearing of the Greek, would have been powerless to arm me with a poniard to strike my fellow-man."

"You are right, doctor," said the Prosecutor, shaking me by the hand; "but it is not you who are in question. It will be my duty," he continued, "to interrogate the Greek, Valentine, and perhaps even Doña Evornia herself; and I have reckoned upon you to prepare her for that trying ordeal, and even for a possible confrontation with them."

"Are you, then, going to arrest the Greek and Valentine?"

"That is already done. Doña Evornia has just now sent to claim her husband's

body. Pray give orders, doctor, to have it taken home.'"

I had to bow to the decision of the magistrate, a grave man, incapable of acting without sound reason. I had to force my way through the crowd in front of the hospital, who were discussing the murder of the previous day. At the door of the victim's house another crowd was assembled; they were already talking of the arrest of Valentine and the Greek; and I found, to my great indignation, that I was the only person astonished at the suspicions which rested upon them, or who attempted to defend them.

In Evornia's *salon* I found a lay brother, yawning at the full stretch of his jaws while waiting for the monk whom he had escorted thither. Presently the good father came out of the young widow's room, his brow hidden under his cowl, and his hands joined. He was praying. On perceiving me he terminated his prayer with the sign of the cross.

"What a dreadful event, doctor!" said he, lifting up his hands.

"How is your penitent?" I asked.

He looked at me, shook back his cowl, and put on his broad-brimmed hat.

"A strong mind, that," he answered, still steadily looking at me; and then, followed by the brother, he went his way, bestowing his benediction on the crowd, who knelt to receive it.

When I was taken to the same room in which I had seen Doña Evornia on the preceding evening, I found the shutters closed, so that no light came from without and the vast apartment was in darkness, except for the glimmer of a night-lamp. Evornia, who was sitting by the side of her baby's cradle, was clothed in black. I had been told by the waiting-woman that she refused to eat; and when I took her hands in mine they were icy cold. With the authority of my age, my profession, and my old friendship, I spoke to her of her duties and of her infant son.

I opened one shutter, telling her it was wrong for her to sit thus in darkness and solitude. The light streamed in a golden flood into the room. Evornia, surprised and dazzled, put her hand up to her eyes, and knelt down before the image of the Virgin, with the lamp burning at its foot.

I kept silence for a while, as I gazed at her bowed and writhing form; I suffered in the contemplation of the agony of that heart. It at least was beating strongly; for it there was no silence, no stillness. Presently the young widow arose from her knees, gazed for a few moments upon her sleeping child, and once more resumed her seat in the armchair. Her expression was the same as on the previous evening—stern, restless, and fierce. Without telling her of the direction in which the suspicions of the Prosecutor pointed, I prepared her for the possibility of his visit. Evornia trembled slightly, rose, walked to the window, paused, and then, with an abrupt movement, bent towards the spot on which

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her husband had fallen. I took her back to her chair; she let me do so quite submissively; but I could not induce her to speak except in monosyllables. Evornia kept down by a strong effort of her will cries, sobs, and tears; in fact, every demonstration natural to her sex; but I augured nothing good from this external calm.

At about five o'clock in the evening I was hastening home, after my daily round of visits. The director of the post-office had just handed me a tiny box which had been sent to me from the Mirador "hacienda," by the Huatusco mail. For a long time past some of the "rancheros," in enumerating to me, according to Mexican usage, the remedies which they had been accustomed to use since their childhood, had constantly referred to "animated seeds," of which a decoction, drunk while fasting, is a specific for liver-complaint. A hundred times over I had been promised a sight of this phenomenon, which, however,

I regarded as fabulous. Quite lately the major-domo of the Mirador "hacienda," having again positively affirmed the existence of the "animated seeds," I had amiably defied him to prove his assertion. Judge, then, of my feelings when the little box which I now held in my hand reached me.

I did not believe in the rotatory motion of a vegetable tissue ; nevertheless, denial is so easy a process, that I always make it a rule to consider everything twice before I pronounce a final judgment. "Truth," says Pascal, "roams unknown among men." For my part, it is my only pride to seek it, to endeavour to recognize it. Man, either from idleness or from ignorance, always begins by denying ; and yet what a supreme delight is the discovery of a truth, however small it may be ! That at least is a service rendered to humanity.

With feverish eagerness I prepared my eyeglasses, my microscope, and my little forceps. I laid a large sheet of white paper



on my table, and I closed the windows and doors lest a breath of air might stir the "animated seeds," and so lead me to believe in their motion. What if I were to deceive myself, to be the dupe of my senses, to mislead the Academy of Sciences and the public? The mere idea of such a thing made me shudder, and urged me to redouble my precautions.

At length I opened the precious box, and saw, lying perfectly still upon a layer of cotton-wool, six brown triangular seeds, which precisely resembled in form the *polygonum phagopyrum*, vulgarly called "sarrasin," or black wheat, but twice the size. I placed the three seeds in a line, at equal distances each from the other, covered my mouth with my handkerchief, and waited with anxiety which it would be unworthy of me to deny.

Ten minutes passed, nothing stirred; but I reflected that the fisherman, though an hour elapse without his getting a bite, is not justified in coming to the conclusion

that there are no fish in the river. After a long interval of patience, I was just growing drowsy, when I thought I observed a slight quiver in one of the grains. Presently it rocked slightly, and I felt myself turning pale. Five minutes later my three grains were rolling about as if they were drunk, tumbling against, rolling away from, and passing each other. O Nature! O Science! O wonders of God! Like Newton, my master, I bared my head to salute the Creator.


Some one knocked at my door. I was very little inclined to get up and open it, or even to answer; but at length I called out, "Come in!"

The alcaïde of the prison appeared. He had come to summon me, in the name of the Judge of Criminal Affairs, to visit the Greek, who was complaining of illness; so that he might know whether the young woman could, without danger to her health, be confronted with the corpse of Don Félipé on that same evening.

I really could not conceal the annoyance which this message from the judge caused me. I grumbled against the whole tribe of assassins and all the fools who allow themselves to be assassinated. Here was a most curious experiment, the examination of a fact which might revolutionize science, a discovery equal to the grandest which had been made in these modern times, and it was to be postponed, perhaps lost, on account of a woman who had nothing on earth the matter with her.

“I perceive that I am disturbing you, doctor,” said the alcaïde; “but it is not my fault. I am not rich enough to be my own master, so I have to obey.”

These wise and melancholy words restored me to myself. After all, it was I who was in the wrong; the present was no time for scientific experiments. I wrung the hand of the alcaïde, to thank him for the lesson he had just given me; and while the good gaoler, much surprised at my action, was twisting his hat about, and



saying over and over again that I was very kind, and that his wife and children were quite well, I had put my instruments in order and replaced the precious seeds upon their bed of cotton-wool.

When I entered the great courtyard of the prison, the prisoners were taking the air. They immediately surrounded me, complaining of a thousand imaginary maladies, and all, without exception, demanding to be sent to the infirmary, whence it is so easy to contrive an escape. A gaoler laid about him, right and left, with a stick, to clear a passage for me. This made me indignant.

“Thieves! Assassins!” repeated the gaoler.

“Yes! but men—sick men!” I remonstrated.

“Sick men, who would rip up your stomach with their knives, if it suited their purpose, as readily as you would lance a gumboil, doctor.”

I did not doubt the fact; nevertheless,

I do not know any sight which makes my heart beat so fast as that of a man being beaten; and I shall never, so long as I live, cease to demand the abolition of the stick in the Mexican army and prisons.

The Greek had been placed in a large room with whitewashed walls, usually occupied by prisoners who were condemned to death, a circumstance of which she was happily ignorant. She was lying on a straw bed, and she sat up on hearing the key grind in the enormous lock. Her large black eyes looked out at me from a deathly-pale face, and she rose and came towards me, sobbing. The gaoler discreetly remained outside the door.

"What do they want with me? What have I done?" asked the young woman imploringly.

Although I know that women, like children, have tears at command, I have never been able to see one of these creatures weep without being profoundly troubled by the spectacle. I tried to console the

Greek, who was feverish and languid. Her head drooped upon her breast, and her magnificent arms hung listlessly by her side. Her features, marvellously fine, pure, and regular, wore an expression of fear and also of resigned grief. What would the admirers of this woman, whose ordinary bearing was so majestic, her head so proudly upheld, her look so imperious, have said if they could have seen her state of prostration? It was strange that the fragile, timid, fair Evornia seemed to have assumed the bearing of the dark, haughty courtesan, while the latter had the attitude and expression I would have looked for in Evornia.

"He is dead, is he not?" asked the Greek, repeating, by a singular coincidence, the very words of the young widow.

"Are you the only one who does not know that?"

"No, doctor; but, in spite of myself, I doubted. I loved him."

She said these words in a half-whisper, blushed, hid her face in her hands, and began to weep silently.

“You know that Valentine is accused?”

“And myself also, no doubt.”

She made this reply with a fine gesture of disdain.

“Did you not once threaten Don Félipé?”

“He forsook me, after having promised to marry me, doctor, and I was mad with grief. I kill him! I!—above all, to-day!”

“Had he then become your lover once more?”

The Greek raised her head; her eyes met mine full and frankly.

“Yes,” she answered, with pride.

The devil take the women, thought I. It would kill my poor Evornia if she suspected that. I wanted to get away, but the Greek wished to detain me. I could not, without a breach of duty, reveal to her the cruel confrontation which was

considered necessary to the ends of justice, and I left her in tears, to go to Valentine's temporary prison. I found him furiously angry, striding about his room, and denouncing the judge. He had just undergone an interrogatory.

"This is an error which shall cost them dear, doctor," said he. "I will never forgive the judge for having suspected me. I swear to you, upon my salvation, so soon as I am free I will set fire to their tribunal, with my own hand, by myself, in full daylight, in the face of their alguazils and their gaolers! I will pull down the prison, doctor, just as sure as your name is Bernagius, and mine is Valentine! They shall shut up no more honest people here! As for the Judge of Criminal Affairs, he shall answer for every one of the stupid and insulting questions he has put to me."

There was no reasoning with the prisoner, a hot-headed good fellow who believed what he said, but would forget



it in a quarter of an hour after he was let out.

He begged me to take news of him to his father, and to order his supper. I left the prison morally convinced of the innocence of the two accused persons. At the door I met the judge, who wanted to take me home to dinner with him. When I told him that the feverish state into which the Greek had been thrown by alarm, surprise, and grief, need not interfere with the contemplated confrontation, he rubbed his hands. He was anxious to get done with this affair, and, besides, it was time to proceed to the burial of Félipé.

During dinner we talked of nothing but the murder. I imparted my own impression to the judge, who allowed me to speak without interruption, only smiling and shaking his head when I assured him that justice was on the wrong tack, and that the Greek and Valentine ought to be set at liberty.

When I had concluded, the judge con-

fided to me his own opinion, and informed me of the result of the inquiries which had been made by his agents. The Greek, it appeared, was a native, not of Guadalajara, but of Tampico. She had been married at fourteen, separated soon afterwards from her husband, and had given much scandal at Vera Cruz, Puebla, and Tlacotalpam. She belonged to an excellent family; her supposed mother was in reality her nurse. She had become a widow at eight-and-twenty, at which period Don Félipé was her lover; and the whole town knew what threats of vengeance she uttered against him when he married Evornia. About five months since, Don Félipé had once more fallen into the net of the dangerous siren. To this fact all those who frequented the house of the Greek bore witness.

“Now, doctor,” continued the judge, drawing his chair close to mine, while I lighted a cigar at the *brasero*, “the Greek acknowledges that Don Félipé left her

house last night at eleven o'clock, after having passed the evening there, in company with Valentine, who withdrew shortly before. It was at midnight that Don Félipé was stabbed, for about that hour the watchman of the quarter had stood for some minutes close to the spot on which the body was found. At half-past twelve, Valentine, who declares that he had been walking about the streets until that moment, was talking quietly to the Greek, who was seated at her window. They were seen thus engaged by a watchman; and, besides, neither of them denies it."

"But can they not explain this coincidence?"

"Criminals explain everything, doctor, with more or less skill. Valentine, being jealous of Don Félipé and the Greek, went out, according to his own story, to spy upon them. He wandered about at hazard, and even acknowledges that he met his rival; then it was that he me-

chanically retraced his steps towards the house of the Greek, found her sitting by the window, and, in her society, forgot all about the hour."

"I do not see anything improbable in all that."

"You read in men's bodies, doctor—that is your profession; mine is to read in their consciences. Here is another fact: your report, which I have carefully read, states that the wound must have been inflicted by one of the knives which the tobacco-porters use."

"Yes, and also that the knife in question was a new one."

"The day before yesterday, at six o'clock in the evening, the pedlar who lays out his wares on the parapet of the middle bridge sold one of those knives to a man whom he is certain of being able to recognize; and I am preparing a scene for you, after the fashion of my profession."

Here the judge left me alone for a short time. My ideas were, I must confess,

thrown into confusion. I still believed the Greek to be innocent; but I began to suspect Valentine, and it made me very sad to think what a blow was about to fall on the family of that unhappy young man.

I also thought of poor Evornia, and decided within myself that the judge would not be in any way bound to reveal the whole truth to the poor young widow. There could be no need for embittering her memory of the husband whom she loved so fondly, whom she mourned so bitterly, of the father of her child. I regretted that the corpse had been brought back to her house, but the law so willed it; and my respect for the law—respect without which justice, public order, and government are impossible—has always distinguished me from my compatriots, who delight in nothing so much as the evasion or infraction of the law.


The judge did not wish to attract attention, so that we did not go to the prison until nearly nine o'clock. The

Greek, who repeatedly and urgently demanded what it was they wanted with her, was conducted through the side-streets, followed closely by Valentine, hoarse with shouting and protesting. I went on in front, to prepare Evornia not to be alarmed at the coming and going which she should presently hear in her husband's room, but feeling very much at a loss how to assign reasons which should conceal the truth.

The night was dark, and consequently the streets were empty, for there are few towns in the world in which people go to bed so early as at Orizava. Here and there a few women sitting at their windows were discussing the events of the day. I had to pass close by my own house, and it was not without sadness and yearning that I thought of the "animated seeds." On other evenings I could almost count on quiet, and it was my habit to be installed at this hour at my writing-table. And now, here I was running about the streets,

while the seeds were jumping in their box, exhausting their contractile force, and it might be months before I should be able to procure fresh specimens.

I stopped. A painful idea had darted into my mind. What if, profiting by the hours which I should be forced to lose, any curious or ignorant person, any one in fact, were led, by one of those accidents which reduce our calculations to nought, to discover the singular properties of the "animated seeds," and to send a sample of them to Paris, to London, or even to Mexico! What if I were to be deprived of the honour of proclaiming the great discovery! Did not the soil which I trod, that land which had been discovered by Christopher Columbus, the Genoese, bear the name of Americanus Vespuccio the Florentine? I had just resolved to turn into my own house when I stumbled into a hole, and the shock restored my moral equilibrium. I went on my way with a resolute step, intent only on Evornia's



grief, and endeavouring with all my might to think of some means, besides that of time, by which it might be possible to console her.



## CHAPTER III.

EVORNIA had succeeded in banishing the matrons of the town from her widowed chamber, but she had not been able to hinder them from laying out the corpse of her husband after the fashion of the country. Don Félipé lay on a bed strewn with flowers, a rosary was twisted about his fingers, and his face was turned to the window. At his head lay a wreath of pansies, and six huge wax-tapers were burning by the bedside. A blind old man knelt on the floor reciting in a low monotonous tone the appointed prayers. At midnight, unless any ecclesiastical intervention should occur, the young man's body would be noiselessly removed to the parish church, for interment under the

flags of a chapel founded by one of his ancestors.

On entering Evornia's room I found her alone, kneeling near her bed, her face covered with her hands. At the sound of the closing door she turned, and cast an angry glance at me. The child, who lay on a pillow at her feet, was wailing piteously.

"You must be reasonable, Evornia," I said; "you must listen to me and obey me." I helped her to rise as I spoke. "You are a mother; you seem to forget that."

"I have no milk," said she, laying her two hands on her breast. Then she began to walk round the room, and approached the window. She seemed to want to look out; but I prevented her, fearing lest she should see the judge pass by with the accused persons and their escort.

"Come, come, my child, you must take courage! They will be coming presently to pay the last duties to Don Félipé: promise me that you will be calm."

“Have I cried, have I wept, since yesterday? I know nothing, I see nothing, I hear nothing, doctor. Let them take him away quickly!”

“The ceremony cannot take place in silence. The alcaïde and the judge have to bring hither a man who is supposed to be the murderer.”

“A man!” cried Evornia; “a man! Who is he?” she asked anxiously.

“Valentine Solar.”

“One of the lovers of that creature whom you call the Greek?”

Evornia uttered these words in so strange a tone, with such a strong expression of anger and disdain, that I looked at her in surprise.

“You persist in regarding me as a child of six, my dear old friend,” said she. “Do you suppose I am the only person who did not know that Félipé had been the lover of that woman—that he was her lover yesterday?”

Evornia knew the truth! At length I

had discovered the meaning of her fierce intractable humour, and the thoughts that tortured her. The cruel fangs of anger and jealousy were tearing the simple, loving, true heart, struggling against the grief of an irreparable loss, and thinking to vanquish it. But the hour of reaction could not be far off, and I dreaded the terrible crisis which would let loose those imprisoned sobs and tears.

I forced the young widow to sit down, and lifting the infant from the floor I placed him in her arms. Then I kneeled at the feet of the poor creature, full of profoundest pity for the unmerited grief that was breaking the heart of her whom I had known from her babyhood, whom I regarded as my own daughter. I was troubled, I knew not what to say. Talking to women is not in my line. But my eyes were full of tears, and I murmured terms of childish endearment, sweet, tender, and caressing. I would have liked to have taken Evornia in my arms as I used to do

when she was a little child, and to have hushed her to sleep with a French cradle-song in which she delighted.

She began to listen to me. By degrees her features lost their terrible rigidity. She seized my hand, kissed it, and embraced her baby-son. Her breast heaved; tears sparkled on her eyelashes; a moment more and she would have wept, and so been saved from fever and madness, when, starting up suddenly, she cried distractedly,—

“Leave me! You kill me, you drive me to despair!”

“Cry, my child, cry!” I urged her most earnestly.

At this moment the waiting-woman entered, and, unseen by Evornia, made signs to me that the judge required my presence.

I had to obey. I embraced Evornia, telling her that I would return immediately, and again begging that she would not take notice of any noises she might hear. I severely censured the conduct of those

who had sown the first seeds of jealousy in her heart, and entreated her to believe that her husband, though guilty of folly, had not for a single moment ceased to love her. She listened to all I had to say, shook her head, and allowed me to leave her without uttering one word.

I tried to shake off my fears. On the previous evening I had believed I should have only an ordinary sorrow to console, and I had formed a plan for inducing Evornia to go to Puebla or Cordova after the nine days of seclusion exacted by Mexican custom. Change of place is a remedy for pain of mind ; and maternal love, that flame with which the hearts of mothers are consumed, would by degrees soothe the anguish of the young widow. Thus had I reasoned ; but now, how was I to act ? What sentiment was I to invoke ? I could only appeal to the virtues of the Christian, to resignation or to oblivion, and each was alike impossible.

I kept my discovery to myself, and obey-

ing the instructions of the judge, who begged me not to let my mind wander, I posted myself close to the blind man, in front of the entrance by which the Greek was to be brought in. The judge expected tears, cries, and a fainting-fit, and I had taken my precautions accordingly. More than twenty tapers were burning around the dead man ; so that the room, vast as were its dimensions, was sufficiently lighted throughout. On a signal from the judge Valentine was brought in. At the threshold the young man stopped ; he was dazzled by the light. He took off his hat, made the sign of the cross on his breast, and then with a firm step he approached the corpse and sprinkled the holy water with an unflinching hand.

"Valentine Solar," said the judge, addressing him, "do you know this man?"

Valentine smiled disdainfully, and gave his shoulders a most irreverent shrug.

"He takes it coolly," whispered the judge to me.

"He is innocent," I replied.

"Wait a bit, doctor; you are in too great a hurry to pronounce judgment."

The blind man, having resumed his prayers, was bidden to keep silence, and Valentine was sternly reminded of the respect due to justice. My mind was wandering in spite of myself in the direction of the "animated seeds" reposing in the bottom of their box when it was recalled by hearing the judge give an order that Hermenegilda Ybañés (the Greek) should be brought in. She too, like Valentine, was confused for a moment. She recoiled, and uttered a faint cry at the sight of the corpse; but immediately recovering herself, she knelt down, sobbing, at the feet of Don Félipé.

"Stand up," said the judge, in a tone of command, "and tell us whether you recognize the body before you."

"It is that of Don Félipé Acéval, upon whose soul may God have mercy!" said the Greek.



"You know how he met his death?"

"I know," she answered, "that I would gladly give my own life to restore his."

"What have you to reveal to us?"

"Alas, nothing!"

"Whom do you suspect?"

"No one."

She drew near to Valentine, who was looking at her compassionately, and supported herself upon his arm.

The confrontation seemed to have come to an end, and I was about to return to Evornia, when an alguazil brought in a man who, after a momentary start of terror, saluted the corpse, the blind man, and the gaoler. This man proved to be a pedlar, a stranger in the city, who for a week past had been in the habit of laying out the contents of his pack on the parapet of the middle bridge. The judge led him up to a crucifix.

"Swear to tell the truth," said he, "on the image of God, who died for you."

The pedlar placed his hat—it was orna-

mented with a silver cord and tassels—on the floor, and solemnly took the oath demanded of him.

“Now,” continued the judge, “look around you, and, listening to the voice of your own conscience only, tell us whether you recognize the man to whom you sold a two-edged blade yesterday.”

“I recognize him,” said the pedlar.

I looked at Valentine; he did not move. The large black eyes of the Greek rested uneasily upon the young man, and her hand dropped from his arm.

“Point out the man whom you recognize,” said the judge, after he had made a sign to his clerk.

“There he is,” said the pedlar, and he stretched out his arm towards the corpse.

A moment's silence ensued. This unexpected revelation upset all our ideas, put every suspicion to rout, and brought the motive of the crime again into dispute. The pedlar, twice questioned, confirmed his first assertion, and described the purse

from which Don F  lip   had taken the money to pay for the knife, and which was in fact the purse ordinarily carried by the deceased. The judge, at a loss what course to pursue, had just ordered Valentine and the Greek (whom he could not make up his mind to release) to be removed, when a stir was heard at the door, where the guards and some curious bystanders were collected. The crowd made way, and Evornia appeared.

I was about to rush towards her, but the judge caught hold of me roughly, and restrained me. The young widow, on perceiving the corpse of her husband, supported herself against the wall, her eyes fixed on the face of the dead, and we could hear her nails scrape against the stone. Her lips twitched; she seemed to be unconscious of all but the body; nervous spasms contracted her chest; she ceased to breathe for a minute, and then the air rushed with a whistle into her exhausted lungs. The blind man, imagining from the silence

that he was alone, resumed his monotonous prayers, and at the sound of his voice Evornia turned her head. She perceived the Greek, made a step in advance; the red blood rushed hotly into her pale cheeks, and she stretched her hand out towards her rival.

At the sight of Evornia, the Greek had retreated to the recess of the window, and there, one knee on the ground, she gazed in horror, with clasped hands, on the contracted features of the young widow. A painful, vivid, indelible impression of this scene has ever since remained with me. The two beautiful creatures, of types so distinct, formed a strange contrast. The Greek, whose splendid arms could have crushed Evornia with ease, knelt there, humble, bowed down, abased. Her black hair fell in wild disorder on her dusky olive cheeks; her head, supported against the wall, was slightly bent forward; her red lips, half open, showed her white teeth, which chattered now and then; while her

great eyes, soft and timid, were drowned in tears, and seemed to implore pardon. Evornia, on the other hand, shaking her long golden locks, dry-eyed, her little hand outstretched, seemed like a lioness, fascinating, paralyzing her prey, as she moved towards her, cold, resolute, and terrible.

“ Ah,” said she, in a harsh voice, “ you did well to come ; I expected you ! ”

Once more I would have interposed ; this time it was Evornia who repelled me without even looking at me.

“ Try, then,” she continued, “ to warm your lover ; try to give him back the life you have taken from him.”

Evornia made one more step forward ; and the Greek, at last breaking the spell which had seemed to hold her, rose and ran to the judge.

“ By the soul of your mother, señor,” she cried, pointing to Doña Evornia, “ there is the assassin of Don Félipé ! Look at her eyes ! ”

At this accusation Evornia hastily

raised her hands to her brow, and her wandering glance once more fell upon the livid face of her husband.

“Pardon ! Mercy !” she cried.


And then she dropped into my arms and those of Valentine, to whom I, foreseeing the issue of this sad scene, had made a sign to be ready.

We carried the young widow to her room ; and while hurriedly arranging the bed so that we might lay her down, we found under the coverlet a knife which the pedlar declared to be that which he had sold to Don Félipé. What was the meaning of this ? I remonstrated with the judge, who talked of an arrest, a *procès-verbal*, and an examination. In spite of her tears and supplications, he ordered the Greek to be taken to a convent, after which he announced to Valentine that he was free. The young man immediately offered me his services, and I accepted them. The neighbours, who but yesterday had been so kind and ready to help, now fled from

the accursed house; and Valentine had to superintend the funeral of the man who had been his rival, and of whose murder he had been suspected.

The cries of Evornia's infant were incessant; after having been fed for four days on fevered milk, the poor little creature was seized with convulsions. The waiting-maid had run away from the house; I was obliged to resort to an old Indian woman who was devoted to me, and got her to take charge of the child. Towards midnight an apparent calm reigned in the abode that had once been so joyous but was now so tragic. I sat by the bedside of my patient, trying to get my ideas into some kind of order. The judge strode up and down in the corridor, watching for the young widow's return to life and consciousness. The sound of his footsteps disturbed my nerves.

Evornia had long since regained her senses, but she lay with her eyes closed, and she made no answer to my questions.



At one o'clock she asked me to give her water to drink, complained of pain in her head, and entreated me to relieve her of it. The judge then approached us. Although I am naturally of a peaceful and placable disposition, and although I entertained a high respect for his person and office, I was strongly tempted to take him by the collar and pitch him into the courtyard. What did the man want? A victim, a criminal—more blood in fact. And what end would be served by that?

Evornia, hearing him speak, opened her eyes.

"What do you want to know?" she asked.

"The name of the murderer, señora."

"Well, then, what the Greek once *said*, I have *done*. And now let me alone."

The judge drew nearer to her, and asked her another question.


"I only am guilty," she answered, raising herself up on her pillow. "What more do you want?"



She looked sternly and without betraying any emotion at the magistrate, and then she turned to me.

“Ah,” she murmured into my ear as she laid her fair slender arm upon my neck, and pressed her face against mine, “you do not shrink from me with horror; you lament for me, you love me, in spite of all. How did it happen? I don’t know anything about it. I learned that he was false to me, and I tried to despise him; but I could not—I loved him too much. I had made him buy a knife, and then I entreated him not to go out, to remain with me; but he would not. He went out, laughing at my tears; and in the evening this wicked father, this traitorous, perjured, false husband, came home, singing. My head was on fire. I went to meet him, and he threw open his cloak to take me in his arms. Why do you make me tell you? You know it all.”

She closed her eyes, and was silent. At length the judge withdrew. He had



consented that Evornia should remain a prisoner in her own house, on my responsibility. What a night was that ! I heard the sentinel, who had been placed on guard at the house-door, answer, hour after hour, to the challenge of the night watchman, and each time the sound forced my mind back to the awful reality from which it was endeavouring to escape. At four o'clock the infant died. At the same moment Evornia uttered a terrible cry, pronounced a few words which I could not understand, and then, in the dreadful delirium of brain-fever, she began to struggle with a bleeding spectre.

## CHAPTER IV.

FIFTEEN days after the confrontation which had led to such unexpected results, Evornia was out of danger. It was in the morning, just as the sun appeared upon the horizon, that my poor patient turned upon me her large wondering eyes, once more full of intelligence. The window of her room was open, light rosy clouds floated over the azure of the sky, and Evornia lay looking at me in silence for a long time. My dress was in disorder, my face was gaunt, my beard was unshorn. She pronounced my name, and held out her hand. I tried to speak to her, but I could only stammer.

A week later, the invalid was able to

leave her bed. It then became absolutely necessary to inform her of the death of her child, and in this painful task her confessor aided me. Evornia's grief was mute.

"What should he have done in this world?" she said, after some time, while large slow tears rolled down her cheeks; then she added, "I was no longer worthy to be a mother. What God does, He does well."

I visited her morning and evening, and found her always sitting at the window of her room. Motionless and absorbed, she would sit for hours watching the clouds as they passed across the sky, following with her eyes the flight of the eagles, as they soared above the summits of the Cordilleras, wheeled round in great circles, and presently were lost in the height.

But what had become all this time of the "animated seeds"? Alas, they reposed in their box, which I had never had either leisure or inclination to open! One

morning—I had just seen Evornia eat with some appetite—I came back to my house with a mind comparatively free and at rest. I dusted my writing-table, on which even my housekeeper herself was never permitted to lay a hand. I felt myself in the vein for study, and that evening I proposed to resume my labours.

On my return from my afternoon rounds, just as I was feeling myself free for a while, a letter was brought to me from the judge, who begged that I would go to him immediately. For the last three weeks I had forgotten men, their passions, their vengeance, and their tribunals. Evornia was saved—my heart beat with pride whenever that thought recurred to me. I smiled at the judge when he congratulated me upon the cure—which he described as miraculous—but I turned pale the next moment when he thanked me, in the name of society, for having preserved a criminal, for justice, for punishment.

Anger, surprise, amazement, indignation



—the most violent and the most opposite sentiments—invaded my mind at this declaration. I merely bowed, however. I had a hundred replies ready to make, but I was not master of myself. I hurried home, and threw myself, quite overwhelmed with grief, into the chair which stood before the table I had prepared in the morning with so light a heart. What, for fifteen days and nights I had watched and tended Evornia, tracking the windings of her delirium, fighting a hand-to-hand battle with death, routing and vanquishing that fell enemy, and all this in order that a man should come and tell me, in the name of justice and of society, that the existence won by science belonged to him !

Evornia, the Evornia of the fatal night of jealous passion—of the crime, if I must use the word—had died of the blow that she had struck, that blow which had killed her infant also. She whom I had seen only a few hours previously, pale, languid, repentant, vanquished, was my conquest, and

my possession. She belonged to me ! It was I who had restored pulsation to her heart, thought to her brain, and motion to her body. Evornia was my work, my creation, my daughter ! And the judge, coolly, with an almost amiable air, thanked me for having preserved a victim for him—food for his scaffold !

From nine o'clock in the evening until five in the morning I walked up and down in my study, forming the most extravagant projects, one after another. I even dreamed of taking Evornia to my own house. My door was cased in iron, my windows were as securely barred as any in the city. I could stand a siege. The people in general do not like the police ; they would take my part, if any attempt was made to force my dwelling.

Then the idea of returning to Europe occurred to me. In fact, nothing would be more easy than to carry Evornia off. If I could but get the young widow on board a foreign ship, were it even a trading-vessel,

Mexican justice would shut its eyes, and society would follow its example.

To such violent and impracticable expedients there gradually succeeded sensible suggestions, the result of reflection. I was well acquainted with Comenfort, the President of the Republic, a humane and upright man, who had pardoned all his enemies on his accession to power. He knew all about my professional and scientific labours, and to my supplications and arguments he would grant the pardon of Evornia. I would get my petition supported by the Ministers of France, England, and Spain, and by the Minister of Guatemala, the father of the diplomatic corps here, an old man of eighty-five. The Archbishop of Mexico, to whom I had dedicated my treatise on the saccharine principle of *raphanus sativis niger*, would, if necessary, present my petition in person. His house was a place of sanctuary; in the last extremity I would take Evornia thither.

I went to the judge's house, and without



revealing any of my plans, but pleading the still precarious state of my patient's health, I begged that she might remain a prisoner in her own house until the end of the month. The judge, who persisted in regarding her as a mere ordinary criminal, made great difficulties about acceding to my request; but in the end he yielded.

That evening Evornia seemed more than usually sad. Whether her instinct suggested it, or whether she had been apprised of the intention of the judge, through the indiscretion of the sentinel who was placed at her door, I do not know; but she began to talk to me about her trial. I endeavoured to turn the conversation.

"No," said she resolutely; "this must be spoken of sooner or later, and it is better to talk of it to-day."

With surprising calmness she discussed her future fate.

"They will let me live," she said, in conclusion; "and I would much rather die."

I protested against this. I did not wish

to inspire her with any false hope, and therefore I refrained from telling her what I had resolved to do, and merely said that I proposed very shortly to proceed to Mexico. She seemed uneasy, and begged me to postpone my journey ; but as I was going in her interest, and there was not an hour, nor indeed a minute, to be lost, I had the strength to resist her.

After this she remained lost in thought.

“Now you are vexed,” said I. “If I do not yield to your request, it is because grave interests are concerned.”

“Let us say no more. You go on Tuesday ? ”

“At midnight. My place is taken.”

“Come and dine with me to-morrow.”

“Would you not prefer that I should dine with you on the day of my departure ? ”

“On Tuesday ? No ; that is an unlucky day, and I am superstitious. Come to-morrow, I beg of you.”

The *Mexicans* hold Tuesday in the dis-

credit which the French attach to Friday. I kissed Evornia's two little hands in acquiescence. I was relieved to see her so calm, and happy to think that she would soon be free to take refuge in a convent, according to her secret desire.

I could not, without being culpable in my own eyes, start for Mexico until I had thoroughly studied the "animated seeds." I was so convinced that my journey would have the desired result, that I at once set to work. With what emotion did I open the box that contained the precious grains ; with what joy did I lay them out upon the sheet of paper prepared to receive them ! As if in response to my impatience, two of the seeds began to move almost instantaneously. They turned, twisted, tumbled about in most fantastic fashion. The phenomenon was not the result of a singly-directed force ; I knew not what to think.

I cut open a seed, one of those which remained motionless. It contained a grey substance, which, when examined by the

microscope, proved to be composed of irregular and transparent grains. I covered a whole page of my note-book, proposing to place these brief observations in the hands of the Secretary to the Academy immediately on my arrival in Mexico, a precaution which would secure my copyright in my researches, if necessary. But it was essential that I should discover the "why and wherefore" of the phenomenon; and I was about to proceed to the dissection of one of the grains which continued to move under my eyes, when I changed my mind. In less than three days I should be in Mexico; would it not be better that I should make my experiments in the presence of the Academy? Full of this idea I carefully packed up the seeds whose singular properties were soon to occupy the attention of the whole scientific world.

Imagination, that sleepless lunatic, made me believe that night that my journey was accomplished. I beheld myself returning

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to Orizava, the bearer of a document covered with seals and flourishes, by virtue of which a full and free pardon was granted to Doña Evornia Acéval, as a recompense to Dr. Bernagius for his learned essay upon the “animated seeds.”

## CHAPTER V.

MONDAY evening came. The weather was dull, heavy, and oppressive. Great black clouds, driven by the north-east wind, had been gathering all the morning below the summits of the Cordillera, and, being too heavy to rise higher, had massed themselves together in the beautiful valley of the Pearl. The air was full of the electric fluid, and all nervous persons, especially women, felt its influence. My female patients kept me attending on them all day long; they complained of giddiness, irritability, sudden terror, and a disposition to cry. All these were disorders of the organism that would be dispelled by the formidable storm with which we were threatened.

From time to time a flash of lightning filled my study with a white dazzling light. I expected a clap of thunder, and was listening, so as to trace the direction of the sound; but the lightning-flashes succeeded each other in silence, and now they were tinted red. Two beautiful xylophagæ, which I had found on the previous evening, and placed on my table, were fighting furiously. The luminous specks that adorn the corslet of this insect, and for which the Mexican ladies prize it highly as an ornament, shone with extraordinary brilliancy. Did there exist a relation between electricity and the phosphorescent organs of my two coleopteræ? I had just asked myself this question, and was about to attempt an experiment, when I remembered that Evornia was waiting for me.

I found her nervous and excited. She welcomed me with the pretty graceful Mexican embrace which surprised me so much when I first received it. We sat down to table; the old Indian woman whom

I had placed in Evornia's service waited upon us. With what touching and affectionate care Evornia attended to me during that repast! It was as though she desired to repay me once for all for the pains I had taken with her; it was as though she divined the effort which I was about to attempt in her favour, and meant to reward me for it in advance.

After dinner she took me back into her room, placed me in a great armchair, laid her head upon my knees—all her former beauty was restored—and began to talk to me of the past. What a memory! What a number of circumstances which I had entirely forgotten did she recall to me! It seems that I had bought her first doll for her, and so long as the said doll lived she had been called Rita Bernagius.

She talked of my explorations, from which expeditions I always brought some wild-flowers home to my little friend. She knew the names, the order, the family, the tribe, of all those flowers. She talked



of my books, and of her poor people whom she made me visit. When any one wanted to get anything from me, she was always applied to. I would refuse, and she would make me obey her unknown to myself. One fine day I gave her name to a toucan, and she was very angry; she thought the bird, with its large beak, very ugly. I rebaptized the toucan and dedicated to my little friend a splendid colibri instead, with plumage, of gold, emerald, ruby, and purple—the *Evornia mirabilis*.

Although Evornia had not heard it since she was a child, she remembered the tune which I used to sing to her to lull her to sleep. I had probably been put to sleep myself with the same air, for I did not remember where I had heard or learned it. I was deeply moved on hearing it sung by Evornia, whose strange sweet accent lent it a singular charm. She remarked my emotion, and left off singing. Then we kept silence for a while.

At ten I rose to go away, but she detained me some time longer. She did not speak, but seemed to be resting profoundly, her head lying upon my knees. Occasionally she heaved a sigh, and a febrile shudder passed over her. I thought she was sleeping, and bent down to see.

"Do not stir," said she; "I am so comfortable, doctor, that I would like to stay like this always. How I love you, my friend, my one true friend! Have I said so to you often? Have you always known and felt it? When I was little I was perpetually with you, and they called me Madame Bernagius to tease me; but they only made me proud. If you had wished it, doctor, I would have been your wife."

I laughed when she said this, thinking of my looks and hers, of my age and hers.

"Don't laugh," she said, starting up suddenly and trembling; "it hurts me to hear you laugh."

"Because it is late, and your nerves are excited by the storm, and because you need

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rest—that is why it hurts you to hear me laugh, my child. Now you must be quiet. Adieu ! ”

“ Not adieu, my dear friend; *au revoir !* ”

I had hardly reached my own house when the long-delayed hurricane broke over the town. For more than an hour, wind, rain, and thunder raged in unchecked violence. Never to my knowledge had the elements fought such a battle in our peaceful valley. By degrees the uproar ceased, and the rain only continued to fall. I fell asleep thinking of the petition which I should present to Comenfort, and of the irresistible pleas I should put forward.

It is eight o'clock, and I have just received an order to certify to the death of Doña Evornia Acéval, who killed herself at midnight.

I shall have strength to do this. She counted upon me when she said “ *Au revoir !* ” I am choking. It is well for those who can weep.

**THE**  
**ASPERGILLUM LYDIANUM.**



## CHAPTER I.

BIANCHI the Italian, better known as Janus Plancus, found, on examining the sand of the Adriatic through a microscope, that thirty grammes of that sand contain six thousand shells of foraminiferæ. Alcide d'Orbigny, the great historiographer of the protozoæ, which Lamarck erroneously included among molluscs, counted four hundred and forty thousand distinct forms in three grammes of the sand of the Gulf of the Antilles. The Gulf of Mexico is less rich: a gramme of its sand contains only one thousand shells. This I have set forth in my twenty-fifth treatise, written for the Institute of the Natural Sciences at Boston.

The foraminiferæ are among the scientific

conquests of the microscope. The ancients knew nothing of that world of infinitely little beings whose bulk forms the sand-banks that are so formidable to mariners in every sea. It was from my close observation of the sand, full of the remains of those animalculæ, which threatens in time to close up the bay of Alvarado, that I collected the elements of my twenty-fifth essay. Such was the enthusiasm excited by that production—which was read on the occasion of the great annual meeting of the Boston Institute—that a gold medal was decreed me by acclamation, and three cheers—the fact is recorded in the newspapers—were given in my honour.

Then a certain Dr. Neidman, of Prussian origin, demanded a hearing. My treatise described a curious mollusc, of the genus *aspergillum*, which I had met with. The fragile acephalous mollusc, which was lodged in a calcareous tube, had accidentally been broken ; but I had, fortunately, studied it so carefully that I could unhesi-

tatingly declare it to belong to a new species. Dr. Neidman had the unparalleled boldness to deny the existence of the genus *aspergillum* in the Gulf of Mexico. He maintained that those molluscs live exclusively in the Red Sea, New Holland, and Java, and insisted that the individual which I described must be a *teredo*, and not an *aspergillum*. The members of the Boston Institute did not indeed thereupon rescind their vote, but the despatch of the medal which was to reward my essay was postponed.

It was not until three months later, and when I was absorbed by my examination into the truth of the asserted cry of the cayman, that I was informed of these incidents. That I should be accused of an error of which the merest tyro among naturalists would hardly be capable! It was too much, and the blow made me curse afresh those boastful Prussians, whose oracle, the famous Humboldt, wrote so many falsehoods about the Americas.



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I was so feverish and prostrate that I had to keep my room for three days, during which time my dwelling was besieged by sympathizing visitors, to whom I related the perfidious accusation of the Prussian. The women, with characteristic generosity, were especially interested in my sorrow and my wrong. I should not like positively to affirm that they comprehended the full meaning of the doubt that had been cast upon my veracity, nor that any one among them was capable of appreciating the characteristics which distinguish a *teredo* or *tarmes* from an *aspergillum*; but I resorted to comparisons. "What would you think," I asked my fair visitors, "of the person who should accuse you of not knowing how to distinguish a piece of Valenciennes from a piece of Alençon lace?" They smiled disdainfully; I was understood.

It was impossible that I could rest under the weight of such an imputation. I felt that I must crush my adversary by a

demonstration which would admit of no reply. I put my affairs in order; I suspended for the time being my study of the cry of the cayman; and without making known my intention to any one, I set out for Alvarado. It was at Alvarado that I had discovered the mollusc which I hoped would bear my name. Were I to be forced to sift, grain by grain, all the sand-hills that border the Gulf of Mexico, I *would* find another *aspergillum*, wherewith to confound Dr. Neidman.

A fortnight afterwards I reached Alvarado. Don Salustio Mendez, who passed two months in the year in the supervision of the shrimp fishery—his house at Vera Cruz did an immense business in shrimps—insisted upon my becoming his guest. His young wife, Doña Esteva, received me with the grace and sweetness which render her beauty doubly attractive; and his two pretty little children, who were respectively five and seven years old, speedily became my firm friends. The elder, Juan,

had a real aptitude for natural history ; he forsook all his amusements to help me in sifting the sand which I brought back from my excursions. His sister, Lola, took great delight in my spectacles.

For more than a month I lived almost exclusively upon the beach, braving sun and storm, hunger and thirst. In vain did my kind hostess endeavour to restrain me ; I escaped from her, to climb the hills, explore the caves, and watch the waves ; I even dived under water to bring up fresh specimens of sand. I was always disappointed, and I invariably came in exhausted. Then Doña Esteva, whose disposition was even more lovely than her face, would console me, and Don Salustio would make me eat and drink. He was an active, estimable, and intelligent man, although he only recognized four things in Nature as worthy of attention—his wife, his two children, and the shrimps which were the source of his wealth.

One evening I crossed the bay to the

wooded coast, that is bounded by the sand-hill called the "Great Simon," and returned with a heavy load of sand. While I was changing my clothes, little Juan, who was always delighted to get hold of my magnifying-glass, began to examine the shining sand, which I had spread out to dry.

"Here is a queer little thing!" exclaimed the child presently. "Look here, Bernagius. You will give it to me, won't you?"

"Certainly; but don't soil your hands. You know dinner is ready, and they are waiting for us."

"Look here, look here!" resumed Juan; "another queer little thing, just the same as the first! Ah, now, I want them both."

At this moment Doña Esteva appeared at the door of my room, leaning on the arm of her husband. She was just twenty-three years old—Don Salustio was thirty. A handsomer couple it would not have been easy to find.

"Do be quick, doctor," said the lady. "We have some of those corn-cakes which you like so much; don't let them cool."

"I am at your orders," I answered.

"Are you going to dinner without looking at the queer little things I have found?" said Juan. "They are very pretty, with their little yellow stems, and I want to know at once whether I may have them."

I went over to the table, and took up the magnifying-glass; then, lifting the little boy quite off the ground, I pressed him to my heart.

"They shall bear your name!" I exclaimed.

"What! these funny little things?"

"Embrace your son, señora!" I continued, addressing the happy mother. "Thanks to him, I can die in peace. The *Aspergillum Mexicanum* is found once more, and it is by the hand of a child that the pride of Dr. Neidman is rebuked!"

Doña Esteva looked triumphantly at

her husband, who smiled. Her beautiful black eyes glistened with sudden tears.

“ Ah,” she said, “ you never will believe me when I talk to you of Juan. Now you hear what the doctor says; *he* is not blind, is he ?”

Heavens, what a good dinner that was ! Never before had the Indian corn-cakes—vulgarly called *tamales*—tasted so well to me. I predicted to Doña Esteva that her son would some day make his mark in science, and that before six months should have elapsed his name should appear in the newspapers, as it was my intention faithfully to record, in the statement which I would draw up without delay, the manner in which the *Aspergillum Mexicanum* had been found again.

I devoted a great part of the night to sifting the sand which I had brought from the “ Great Simon,” but it contained my two specimens only. The next day I deposited them, duly wrapped in cotton, in glass tubes, which, in their turn, I

placed in tin tubes ; and, before I soldered up the latter, I slipped into each a clear and succinct statement, which would be satisfactory to the *savants*, should any accident hinder me from completing my treatise.

I passed several succeeding days in a minute examination of the oyster-bed ; but it proved quite vain. Now my great desire was to return to Orizava, write out my statement, and send it, with proofs in support of it, to the Boston Institute.

I thought of ascending the Rio Blanco to the foot of the Cordillera, and making my way thence to the valley of Orizava. Doña Esteva, who was very reluctant to allow me to depart, opposed this plan. The little Lola was far from well, and her mother feared she was sickening with the fever prevalent in the district ; so that she, very naturally, did not wish that a physician, already on the premises, should go away under the circumstances ; and besides, in ten days, the whole family


were to embark on board a schooner laden with cotton which was coming from Tlaco-  
talpam. By adopting the same means of  
transport I might reach Vera Cruz in less  
than forty-eight hours, and thus arrive in  
time to despatch my precious molluscs by  
the monthly packet. Was it not utter  
rashness to expose my precious treasures  
to the risks to which they might be ex-  
posed in crossing the plains? Doña  
Esteva entreated me, and I allowed myself  
to be convinced, in order that I should  
neither vex her nor seem ungrateful.

I had almost forgotten to record that it  
was on the 21st of November, 1855, at  
forty-two minutes past six in the evening,  
that little Juan discovered the *Aspergillum*  
*Johanneum*.



## CHAPTER II.

EARLY on the morning of the 3rd of December the "Hirondelle" made her appearance. She was a graceful three-masted vessel, and her commander was Captain Sebastian. Now this Sebastian was neither an "old sea-dog" nor a *savant*; indeed, he was apt to boast that he had never been at school; but he knew every bend of the coast between Alvarado and Vera Cruz, and travellers always liked to sail with him if possible. At noon, on the 4th of December, Don Salustio, his wife, and their children were all assembled on the poop. At about two o'clock a young woman came aboard the schooner; and Doña Esteva, with whom I was talking at



that moment, looked long and steadfastly at the new comer, who, instead of advancing and saluting her fellow-passengers, seated herself by the mainmast. The two children, roaming about the deck, approached the solitary woman, who immediately took Lola upon her knee; but Doña Esteva imperiously called them, sternly desired them to remain close by her, and presently took them into the cabin, which Don Salustio was arranging as comfortably as possible for the night.

The wind was favourable, and our light ship sped towards the passage, which is narrowing daily, owing to the foraminiferæ, and which will in time be entirely filled up. I remained on the poop, indulging in a long last look at the panorama which I had so much admired, but was little likely ever to see again. The mingled waters of the Papaloapam and the Rio Blanco formed a wide bay, bordered by a rich band of verdure; on one side the mountains of the Sierra of San Andres looked blue in the

distance ; on the other rose enormous sand-hills, above which a flock of vultures in quest of prey were heavily wheeling. A shoal of porpoises were at play in the middle of the immense basin, and a dozen or so of pelicans, with pouches distended by the results of successful fishing, watched their proceedings gravely. Captain Sebastian shouted ; each of the seven men who composed his crew shouted back to him in the same key. When we were outside the bar comparative quiet was restored on board, and we soon lost sight of Alvarado. I went forward towards the bow, and as I passed the lady who was seated beside the mainmast she suddenly rose, and flung her arms round me. My glasses were pushed aside in the shock of this aggression, and I did not know whose caresses I was receiving, or whether I ought to return them.

“ Doctor, my dear doctor,” exclaimed an agitated voice, “ how glad I am to see you again ! ”

At length I disengaged myself.

"Lydia!" said I; and then I cordially embraced a charming "half-breed" woman of whom I had lost sight for two years.

"What! did you not recognize me, doctor?"

"No, indeed, I did not. You know I am very near-sighted, and your quick movement disturbed the equilibrium of my spectacles. Now let me look at you. Always handsome as usual; but although the eyes are bright, I observe that the conjunctivæ are rather pale. What about the wound?"

"All right, doctor. Look here."

The young woman drew her embroidered chemise off her left shoulder. On her shining golden-tinged skin was a scar like a dull white line.

"Come and sit by me, doctor," said Lydia, "and tell me why you are here."

I told her about the Boston Institute, Dr. Neidman, and the *aspergillum*, and

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then asked her about herself: whither she was going, and whence she had come.

"Doctor," she replied, taking both my hands in hers, while her eyes filled with tears, "I am the most unhappy woman in the world. You know Valerio Castano, the hacienda of San Nicolas?"

"I have seen him."

"He is very handsome, isn't he?"


"That is a matter which never occupied my mind, my dear Lydia."

"He is, I tell you, doctor, both handsome and brave; all the women love him."

"Including yourself, no doubt."

"Yes, for my damnation! for he despises me, and I wish I were dead!"

Here Lydia once more flung her arms around me, and, hiding her face on my breast, she began to sob so bitterly that she quite touched my heart. I brought her back to the mast, and scolded her severely, in order to divert her from her grief.



“ I love him, and he does not love me,” she resumed, in a fierce tone ; “ he is going to marry, and I am flying from Tlacotalpam ; I cannot trust myself, I dread lest jealousy should drive me into committing a crime. I am not a Puebla woman for nothing, doctor ; I know how to handle a knife, and twenty times over I have been tempted to slash the face of the woman who is to bear his name. He would never forgive me, and that protects her. O doctor, how my past haunts me ! ”

“ You ought to have taken the advice I gave you the day after you received that wound which nearly cost you your life.”

“ Don’t awaken that remembrance, doctor ; I owe you a grudge for not having let me die. If all the world were like you, it would be possible to tread the right road again ; but there is no rising out of the gulf I have fallen into. The man who deceived me in the past will have to answer for my sins before God. I would never have belonged to any but him if he had

not forsaken me. Bartolomeo did well when he gave me that blow with his dagger, which would have been my death but for you. He loved me, and I was false to him."

Lydia covered her face with her hands.

"How I suffer!" she resumed, after a short pause; "how I am possessed by the memory of this Valerio! He has scorned me, and I offered myself to him, to be his only. Do men suffer as much from our disdain as we suffer from theirs? Ah, yes, it must be so, for did not Bartolomeo try to kill me?"

She rose, walked a few steps away from me, and, leaning on the ship's side, she looked long at two sea-gulls hovering over the crest of the waves, and seeming to play with the foam.

"There is a fire here," said she, suddenly seizing my hand, and laying it on her breast; "has some one given me a philtre to drink? I think it must be so. You, who are a doctor, must know how one can

tear an importunate thought out of one's head and heart and mind. They say that you have never loved; how have you escaped?"

"My dear Lydia, I have loved, and I have suffered like every other living being."

"But you are cured, you love no longer. But I—I shall love him for ever; I know it: all is over for me. I hate everybody who thinks me handsome now, and, O, I wish I were dead!"

The patience with which I listened to Lydia quieted her a little; she ceased to weep. The impulsive creature declared that she now loved for the first time, and perhaps she was right. Only twenty-two years old, and at the height of her beauty, Lydia was a marvel among the half-breeds of Puebla, who are celebrated for their gracefulness, the perfection of their form, and the smallness of their hands and feet.

During this conversation Juan approached us; his mother immediately



called him away. Don Salustio was strolling carelessly about the ship, but also eyeing the handsome half-breed with attentive curiosity. Lydia, reclining in a rocking-chair, held my hand, and now and then laid it on her forehead. I did not find it easy to withdraw my hand from her clasp; but when I could free myself, I approached Doña Esteva. She did not even raise her eyes when I drew near, but she addressed me in a dry tone, very unusual to her, with the words,—

“Really, doctor, you have strange acquaintances.”

“My profession, señora, like that of the priest, obliges me to ascend and descend all the steps of the social ladder. And, besides, this young woman, whose life I formerly saved, is one of the most beautiful cases of perforation of the lung, followed by a cure, which science can quote. Just picture to yourself that the pleura—but I shall let you judge for yourself—”

“Stop, doctor,” said Doña Esteva,

seeing that I was about to summon Lydia ;  
“ if not out of consideration for me, at  
least think of the children.”

A charming flush suffused the young mother’s lovely face ; I bit my lips, and excused myself as best I could. Thinking of science only, I had entirely forgotten what a gulf yawned between the two female passengers on board the “ *Hiron-delle*.”

“ I expect from your courtesy, doctor,” resumed Doña Esteva, “ that you will not again speak to that—person—while I am on board.”

“ Indulgence is becoming to virtue,” I answered ; “ Lydia is very unhappy, and such a mark of contempt would inflict pain upon her, for which I do not think you would like to be responsible.”

“ As you please, doctor ; but, with your leave, we will not resume our conversation until we reach Vera Cruz.”

With this, Doña Esteva rose, took Lola by the hand, and went over to the other

side of the ship. At this moment, Lydia was coming from that side, and the young mother, pressing her daughter to her side, casting down her eyes, and gathering her gown round her with a movement like the shrinking of a sensitive plant, drew herself aside to leave the passage free. Lydia stopped; her great eyes seemed to envelope Doña Esteva in their flames; then, bending her head, she retraced her steps. Doña Esteva went on, and entered the poop saloon. I stood where I was, in no little embarrassment.

“Is that woman really the notorious Lydia Carbajal, doctor?” asked Don Salustio, who had approached us, and was following the graceful movements of the seductive half-breed with attentive eyes.

“Yes. Your wife had heard of her.”

“Who, in all the province of Vera Cruz, does not know the name and the follies of that fantastic creature, who, braving all the restraints of her sex, asserts the in-

dependence of ours? I had never seen her so near before; and, do you know, doctor, she deserves her reputation for beauty."

"She *is* rather handsome; but I wish she were five hundred leagues away, for your wife has just quarrelled with me on account of her."

"H'm, doctor, this handsome person embraced you after a fashion likely to make more than one jealous."

"I saved her life, my dear sir. It was a magnificent case, and I sometimes boast of it; I should have let you judge for yourself had not Doña Esteva—"

My companion quitted me abruptly; his wife called him. I was walking up and down, sorely tempted to go and talk to Lydia again, and yet not liking to brave my former hostess, for whom I entertained boundless respect, when I was accosted by the captain of the schooner.

"Let me shake hands with you, doctor," said the brave mariner. "I hardly had time to give you a nod, in the confusion of *getting off*."

"Here we are on our way with a fresh breeze, captain."

"Upon my salvation, a little too fresh. As I stand a living man before you, I am asking myself whether I ought not to 'bout ship and make for Alvarado again."

I looked at the speaker; he was perfectly serious.

"Look at the sun," he continued, pointing to that luminary; "does it not look as if it were crowned by an aureole?"

"Yes; that is a phenomenon which is called by physicists—"

"Never mind physicists just now, doctor; let them rest in peace; and tell me what is that you see to the east?"

"Land."

"I have never learned anything," answered Sebastian; "I don't say that to boast of it: I am a Catholic of the old sort, and pride is not my forte; but I can tell you what you take for land is a cloud, a tempest, and behind it will come the north wind. You shall tell me to-morrow, doctor, whether I was right or wrong.

And, besides," he added, lowering his voice, "we have a 'Margarita' on board, and that is enough to burst up the planks of the best calked ship. Tell me, what would you do in my place?"

"I would go on quietly in my course," I answered. "However fast a sailer the 'Hirondelle' may be, she could not reach Alvarado before ten o'clock, and, notwithstanding your knowledge of the coast and the bar, I doubt whether you could get over the latter in the middle of the night. In the open sea what have we to fear?"

"Everything," replied Sebastian, rubbing his hands through his thick hair.

I scanned the horizon afresh, but I could discover nothing of a disquieting nature. The bell announced the hour of dinner, and I turned my steps towards the cabin. I passed two sailors, who were leaning against the netting and watching the sunset; one said to the other,—

"Wind, for certain. That Margarita will bring us ill-luck."

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“Never mind,” said his companion; “if things go wrong, there is plenty of room in the sea for her.”


Then the two sailors held their peace, but I, knowing the superstitions of these grown-up children, resolved to keep a sharp look-out upon Lydia. Just at the entry to the cabin, I again met Sebastian.

“Not a word of your fears before Doña Esteva,” said I.

“Never fear, doctor; I know my duty. If I have blabbed to you, it is because you are a good adviser. Besides, the storm may break either before or behind us. At midnight we shall know what to expect.”

### CHAPTER III.

THE cloud to which the captain had called my attention increased, but nothing of an alarming nature appeared on the horizon. At eight o'clock Doña Esteva summoned her two children, and bade them kneel down on the deck. The two pretty little creatures, with their eyes raised to the beautiful constellations of the Hornbill, the Phoenix, and the Peacock, repeated their evening prayer. The sailors took their caps off, and instinctively bent the knee. Lydia, wrapped in her scarf, had approached the group; but when—the prayer being concluded—Doña Esteva perceived this, she rose, and re-entered the cabin, followed by her husband.






"That lady despises me," said Lydia, with evident emotion.

"Perhaps she pities you still more, my dear Lydia."

"She pity me! O no! My life is an enigma to a woman like her, an enigma which must trouble her too. Did you see the fright and haste with which she called away her children when they were speaking to me? Did she think me capable of harming the pretty little creatures? Do you think, doctor, there is anything to be compared to children? They have heaven on their brow and in their eyes, and I understand why it is that God takes the fairest to make them His angels."

She had laid hold of my arm to steady herself, for the vessel was now rolling a good deal; and she led me back to the mast, took the seat she had occupied in the morning, and began to talk of Valerio. I did not interrupt her; it relieved her to give utterance to her pain. I entirely approved of her resolution to go to Mexico,



to reside there, and relinquish her roving and irregular life.

“Only that I should be so entirely shut up within walls,” she said, “I would seek no other asylum than a convent; but I acknowledge I am afraid of *that*.”

I advised her to get some work to do.

“I shall have to do so,” she replied. “For all the world, I would not recommence my former life. Only to him would I have given myself without reserve, if he had wished it. It tears my heart to think that he will never know how I suffer for his sake; and yet there is a charm in my pain. I cannot tell what it is. There are moments when I feel capable of doing some heroic deed—when I would like to sacrifice myself for somebody. Those who have suffered in the past by my caprices and my infidelities are fully avenged now, doctor; and yet I have an excuse to offer for myself. I did not know that love without hope is a cruel torment.”

"Pooh, pooh!" said I. "All that will pass away. In six months you will have forgotten Valerio."

"Don't say that," cried Lydia fiercely, and starting up with flashing eyes, "or I shall think you are like the others, and hate you too. To-morrow evening," she continued, now speaking slowly, "we shall be at Vera Cruz, and the day after at Orizava. You will allow me to travel with you, will you not? I beg of you to do so. That cannot compromise you, for you have neither wife nor children. I am a sick woman, doctor—a patient in the full meaning of the word. I need some one to pity, to console me. You treated me like a child when I received that wound; you hurt me when you were dressing it, and I resisted; then you scolded me gently. Scold me again, dear doctor; but let me tell you that I love you, and, above all, let me weep."

Lydia's nature, which was full of refinement and tender feeling, had always seemed

to me to be in complete discord with the life which she led. I could not help loving this charming creature, notwithstanding her errors ; and I now promised her that I would not forsake her. Having coaxed her to go below, and lie down in a hammock, I returned to the poop, and perceived at once that the breeze had freshened. Sebastian, who was standing near the wheel, came towards me.

"The night will be better than I ventured to hope," said he. "The wind is blowing from the offing. We must, however, wait for midnight. My crew are uneasy. You see they are all leaning over the bow. If the fellows did not scent something in the air, they would be gambling, in spite of my authority."

"They believe in the malign influence of one of your passengers—I have heard them."

"Why do you talk of that woman, doctor?" said Sebastian angrily, and making the sign of the cross on his breast.

"It is very imprudent to send her name out on the wind. I have six fair golden crowns at home, which I would gladly give that she had never set her foot on board the 'Hirondelle;' and indeed I have just made a vow to lay three of them on the Virgin's altar if we get into port without an accident."

"You have crossed the Gulf a hundred times," said I to Sebastian, trying to combat his superstition; "have you never taken any but the faultlessly good on board?"

"I don't know about that; but what I can affirm is—but stay, let us say no more about it, doctor."

"And let us drink an iced *orchata* in front of the landing-place of Vera Cruz tomorrow," I replied, laying my hand upon our brave captain's shoulder; "I invite you, and you shall confess that you were mistaken."

"May God hear you, and bring your words true! I ought to watch; but I am

worn out, for I did not sleep while we were coming down the river. I am going to rest for awhile, that I may be up at a quarter before twelve."

"Would you like me to watch in your place?"

"H'm! However, your life is at stake as well as my own. Your being here will keep my men on the *qui-vive*; I accept your offer. Good-night, doctor. Rouse me at a quarter to twelve."

With this, Sebastian lay down at full length on a bale of cotton, and presently was snoring sonorously.

I went to my cabin to make sure that the tubes containing the *aspergillum* were all safe. Doña Esteva, her husband, and their children occupied the little state-room which the captain had given up to them. I did not, in the least, share the superstitious fears of the sailors; nevertheless I thought it prudent not to separate myself from the tubes that contained my precious molluscs; so I placed them in the pocket of my coat,

which I carefully buttoned. This precaution having made my mind easy, I resumed my seat on the poop, thinking of the discomfiture of Dr. Neidman, and of the applause which, three months hence, would follow the reading of my twenty-sixth treatise.

One after another the sailors stretched themselves upon the deck. The sky was murky. The ship in her rapid course traced a phosphorescent furrow upon the dark waters of an intensity which surprised me. Every now and then a bright-hued medusa would spread itself out in the midst of the luminous foam, and I regretted that my little companions were not there to enjoy so rare and delightful a sight. I stood by the mainmast thinking of poor Lydia, and hoping that she had no notion of the alarm which her presence on board had created. The history of her past life was well-known to me. She had been left an orphan in early childhood ; and her sad career, that of a fallen woman, was to be attributed

rather to a cruel deception than to evil instincts. And yet Doña Esteva, so good otherwise, so indulgent, was merciless towards the poor half-breed. The jealous uneasiness with which she kept watch over her husband and children, as if the mere presence of Lydia were a stain on those whom she loved, did not escape the observation of the sailors. As for myself, I had no feeling but pity for the poor woman, so foolishly in love with Valerio, who, according to what she had told me, had chivalrously defended her one day when she was insulted.

All went well on deck. The wheel turned noisily, the sails bellied out, and the little vessel, like a horse feeling the spur, sped on with swiftness that justified its name.

A little before midnight Sebastian awoke. He went to the prow, looked long at the horizon, and returned shaking his head.

“Go up to the mainyard,” said he to one of the sailors, “and sing out if you see a light.”



Then he asked for that article of luxury, which only makes its appearance on board the Mexican coasting ships under exceptional circumstances, the compass. The box was opened.

"Vera Cruz is there," said Sebastian, stretching out his arm, when the needle had ceased to move.

"Light on the west," sang out the man at the mainyard.

"Do you recognize it?"

"It comes and goes; it is the Ulloa light."

"Right. Come down. You have not changed the course, have you?" he asked, addressing the others.

"No, captain."

"Go and rest, doctor," said Sebastian, rubbing his hands; "and if you will allow me, I will drink a glass of cognac to your health to-morrow; the liquor of your country refreshes me more than *orchata*."

I walked about the deck for a few

minutes, considering how I should bestow myself for the night. If the sky had been starry, I should simply have stretched myself on a bale of cotton; but the breeze was fresh, and I went down into the cabin, and took possession of a rocking-chair. I placed the chair so that it should move with, not against, the roll of the vessel, and, rocked by the motion, and lulled by the warm atmosphere which is always to be had in the interior of a ship, I closed my eyes. I was half asleep, but I could hear the despairing voices of the wind whistling through the ropes, and the foaming waves dashing against the prow of the schooner. Then she seemed to stop; a solemn silence reigned; but presently she resumed her course; and I felt her gliding over waters in whose depths myriads of zoophytes and molluscs, ay, even of the *aspergillum* itself, were doubtless hidden.

A terrific shock awoke me; I and my chair had both been overturned. A second shock explained the accident: the ship had

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struck on a reef. Overhead were hurrying footsteps, cries, clamour.

"Up! up!" I shouted, rushing towards Doña Esteva's cabin.

The young mother appeared, carrying little Lola, whom I took from her. Don Matilde came after, with Juan in his arms; the poor children, who had been suddenly awakened, were crying. I hurried to the poop, where I laid down my burden, and then returned to assist Doña Esteva. Day was dawning; and in less than five minutes we were huddled all together near the wheel, still ignorant of what it was we had to fear.

The "Hirondelle," leaning over to one side was no longer in motion. The sea was not very high, but it rolled in long waves which, being whipped by the wind, sent their foam into our faces. Sebastian was encouraging his men in a loud, firm voice, while they, perched in the tops, furlled the fluttering sails.

The ship's course had been altered, and


a current had flung her upon the coral reefs of Isola Verde.

Doña Esteva, on her knees, her children clasped to her bosom, looked at the sea with eyes distended by terror. A dull noise was heard, and a rapid glance from Don Salustio apprised me that he as well as I had divined its cause. The hull of the "Hirondelle" had been stove in, and the roaring water was invading the little vessel.

I can still see the unhappy father, standing upright, with dilated nostrils, and arms stretched out above the heads of his wife and children, to protect them. When a hungry wave came foaming towards them, Don Salustio, with clenched fists, holding his breath, crouched like a hunter on the track, ready to fight with the terrible element which came to menace the beings without whom life would be meaningless to him.

Suddenly there arose a tumult at the other end of the ship, brutal voices uttering

shouts and menaces of death. I ran to the spot, and found two sturdy sailors dragging Lydia along, their knives in their hands. She was pale, and her eyes were fixed, her hair fell loose around her, and her bosom was bare; but she neither struggled nor uttered a cry. Sebastian, in a furious rage, was striking the men to make them let go their hold of their victim; he shared the superstition of his crew, but he did not want to have blood shed on board his ship. I threw myself in front of Lydia, and shouted at the madmen who were threatening her; but they were wild with fear, and pushed me violently away. A shock, followed by an ominous cracking and straining sound, shook the ship from stem to stern, and the near prospect of death rendered the sailors merciless. Sebastian and I were losing our ground, when the voice of Salustio made itself heard amid the uproar. He belonged to a caste which the Indians are accustomed to respect, and they hesitated for a mo-



ment, and loosed their hold of Lydia. Feeling herself free, she rushed to the mast, which she seemed to have chosen as a place of shelter. What an awakening, and what a scene!

The water wetted our feet, but the ship sank no lower. The Indians, having recovered from their momentary surprise, rushed upon us.

"Leave us to save your life and ours," said one of them to me. "The sea must have a victim."

Sebastian was knocked down; two sailors seized me. It was all over with Lydia. I was struggling frantically with my captors, thinking at every instant that I should hear the death-shriek of the unfortunate young woman, when the Indians fell back. I turned, and saw Doña Esteva standing in front of Lydia in a firm and commanding attitude, and almost covering her with her own body. In Lydia's arms she had placed the little Lola! Again Don Salustio spoke, and I seconded him.

Sebastian, whose forehead was bleeding from a cutlass-wound received in the fray, came to our aid. The simple, noble, heroic action of Doña Esteva had rendered our words needless; the enemy was conquered.

I seized the hand of the young mother, and pressed my lips upon it with fervent admiration. Lydia gazed, her great eyes wet with tears, upon her who had just saved her, and pressed the child closely to her naked bosom. I led the two women towards the poop, our sole place of refuge now, and when we reached it Lydia knelt down at the feet of Doña Esteva and stretched out her clasped hands. She desired to speak, but only sobs would come. The two children, astonished at this scene, looked from one to the other of us inquiringly, and then, believing, doubtless, that she had offended their mother, they hung on Lydia's neck, crying with her, and imploring pardon for her.

"Pray rise," said Doña Esteva very gently, taking the two hands that were

held out towards her; and then, to escape from the mute admiration of Lydia, who could not take her eyes from her face, she began to arrange the dishevelled hair of the poor young woman and to adjust her torn garments.

I left them thus. On passing before the cabin, which was now full of water, I shuddered to think that, had not an inspiration led me to secure the tubes on my own person, the *Aspergillum Johanneum* must have returned to the bottom of the sea, whence it certainly would not have been brought up again by Dr. Neidman.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE instinct of self-preservation had restored order on board, and the Indians, who always regard a physician as at least half a sorcerer, gathered around me. Sebastian, speaking firmly and quietly, regained his authority to some extent. He was a practised diver, and he proposed to ascertain for himself upon what it was that his ship had struck, so that we might know whether we must at once endeavour to save ourselves, or whether there would be time for us to act with the coolness that is one's best chance in great peril. He passed a rope round his body, under the arms; two stout sailors grasped it, and then he slipped over the ship's side and

disappeared. We all bent over the sea in breathless silence for at least three minutes, and Don Salustio was taking off his cloths, to go to the aid of the explorer, when the captain came to the surface, drew a long breath, and dived under once more.

“God protects us!” he exclaimed, when he had been hoisted on board after his second exploration; “the ‘Hirondelle’ is fixed upon a bed of white coral, from which the north wind only can tear her away. Courage, my lads, courage!”

The crew fell on their knees, and Don Salustio went aft to console the women with the assurance that we were not in danger of sinking.

While Sebastian was speaking, I picked some patches of sand off his legs, with the intention of studying this unlooked-for prize by-and-by with the aid of the magnifying-glass. When the sailors saw that I carefully folded up my sample of the sea’s flooring in a leaf of my pocket-book, they regarded me with mingled curiosity

and fear. I thought it wise to avoid any misinterpretation, and so I told them that I was fulfilling a vow to my patron saint ; an explanation which rendered the action perfectly natural.

The long-boat had now to be made ready, and as it was buried under a portion of the cargo—for there had never been any occasion to use it on any of the short monthly trips of the “*Hirondelle*”—this was no easy task. It had been exposed for three years to the sun’s rays, and was leaky and in great need of caulking. We had no tow ; but we had plenty of cotton. However, before we set to work victuals had to be thought of. A bag of rice, which had been left on deck, and was soaked in water, put the crew in good humour. We had no fresh water ; but a sailor had some water-melons, which he was taking to Vera Cruz ; with these our thirst might be assuaged. Don Salustio bought them from the sailor, and paid him the money down.

At sunset the long-boat was afloat.

Sebastian scanned the horizon long and anxiously. The wind had died away; the sea was becoming calm. It was agreed that we should wait until it was quite smooth before quitting the wreck. The sailors approved of this decision, which postponed our departure until the morrow. The sandy and desert shore of Alvarado rose before us; but we were unfortunately off a part of the coast which is not frequented by the fishing-boats, and no help was to be hoped for. According to the captain's calculations, it would take us ten hours to gain the shore, which was beset with breakers, invisible at our distance from them.

All that day I was constantly helping everybody, from the cook to the caulkers. Having picked up a well-greased sounding-line, I profited by the discovery to procure a little of the sand off the bottom of the hollow in which we were lying, and had the good fortune to get hold of three *porpites* of the species described by the

learned Lesso as belonging to the coasts of Peru; and which had, no doubt, been swept into these strange waters by the caprices of the currents.

The crew appeared to be perfectly subdued; the sailors even ostentatiously avoided approaching the poop. I did not talk to any one except the children, who were greatly amused by the immersion of the vessel. A number of sharks were swimming about us, and I instructed my little pupils in the nature and ways of those monsters. Juan and Lola constantly called Lydia to come and listen to what I was saying, and every now and then my eyes would meet hers; I would give her a friendly nod, and resume my demonstration.

By the time the long-boat was afloat we were all exhausted with fatigue. The two extremities of the ship were high and dry; the sailors took possession of their quarters, and we remained on the poop. We spread a sail upon the deck; Don Salustio seated

himself upon it ; his wife lay by his side, her head pillowed against his breast, while the children played at their feet. We were to embark in the long-boat at daybreak. The sea was becoming more and more calm ; our voyage would be the easiest thing possible—at least I thought so, and endeavoured to persuade my companions to think so too. They were, however, downcast, melancholy, and apprehensive. I did all in my power to cheer them up.

Lydia was near me, sitting in Indian fashion ; and after a while, yielding to that instinct which leads women to seek protection, she leaned her head lightly against my shoulder. A little later, and she unconsciously imitated the attitude of Doña Esteva, letting her beautiful head nestle in my breast, while she thoughtfully watched the children as they tumbled about in the folds of the sail.

“Tell me, Lydia,” said little Juan, suddenly accosting her, “is Bernagius your husband ?”

"Lydia is my daughter," said I, laying my hand on her hair.

She rose abruptly, wrapped her scarf about her head, and moved away. At nine o'clock every soul on board the "*Hiron-delle*," except Lydia and myself, was asleep. I drew near to the poor young woman, who was gazing absently at the sea, and made her sit down by my side. She began to talk to me of the courageous and noble action of Doña Esteva, which had filled her with admiration.

"I wish she would take me into her service, doctor," she said; "I would gladly be her slave. When she came towards me, when she held out her hand, and confided her child to me, I felt as if I were looking at the Blessed Virgin herself."

"And Valerio?" said I, with a smile which I made as roguish as possible.

"I love him," she answered, after a moment's silence; "and I will not banish that love from my heart—from it I have learned once more how to blush."

At midnight Lydia had fallen asleep, and, as I was tired of walking on the narrow platform, I settled a place for myself near her, and proposed to follow her example. The night was dark, the air was perfectly still, and the waves, silent, though moving, rose and fell as if marking the respiration of the ocean. Now and then I noticed that a sailor would get up, examine the sea, come a little way in our direction as if to inspect us, and then vanish. I wished to keep awake, dreading some surprise, some attempt on Lydia's life, for the conduct of Dr. Neidman had taught me what was to be expected from mankind. All of a sudden I remembered that the *Aspergillum vaginiferum*, studied by Blainville, has two hardly discernible valves above its disk. Does the *Aspergillum Johanneum* possess these two valves? I turned and re-turned the tubes which contained my specimens, reproaching myself that I had not verified this capital point; and while brooding over my



culpable negligence slumber surprised me.

Suddenly I felt myself seized by the arm, and struggled, thinking I was dreaming; but on opening my eyes I saw that day had dawned. The sight of Sebastian's face aroused me thoroughly, as without a word he drew me to the ship's side, and pointed to the horizon. A black speck was rising and falling between us and the land. The Indians had taken to the long-boat and deserted us, leaving the defenders of poor Lydia, who had baulked them of their prey, to the mercy of the cruel sea.

## CHAPTER V.

SEBASTIAN, as if struck dumb by our terrible situation, continued silent. The poor fellow had a wife and children, and he was thinking of them. It was plain that the sailors, dreading the evil influence which they in their superstition imputed to the half-breed woman, had on the preceding day plotted this desertion, which not one of us had suspected.

“They will reach land this evening,” said I to Sebastian, and “they will send us help.”

“Unless by a miracle,” replied the captain, “not one of them will ever reach land. They are driving right ahead upon the breakers, and they do not know how to avoid them. If by any chance one of

them should get to shore, it will take him more than a day to reach Alvarado; and where should he find a boat, even supposing he had the courage to return to us? Besides, if we had had a friend among those wretches, he would either have warned us or remained with us. No, no; hunger and thirst will do for us, if the sea should spare us; our sole resource henceforth is the mercy of God."

Sebastian was right. Nevertheless, prompt action was our duty. I went immediately in search of a bottle, with the intention of placing the tubes containing the *aspergillum* in it, a precaution which I ought to have taken earlier. I was up to my knees in water when a cry recalled me to the poop, where I found Doña Esteva, deadly pale, and weeping silently, with her eyes fixed on Lydia, who knelt at her feet, sobbing.

"It is I—it is all on account of me!" said the unhappy woman, over and over again.

Don Salustio, speechless and motionless, held his children by their little hands.

At this spectacle all my coolness returned.

“God forsakes only those who forsake themselves,” said I to myself; “hunger, thirst, and the elements are the ancient enemies of man, but they have not always got the better of him.” Then I addressed the captain: “Let us hold a council. Your Mahometan resignation may be all very meritorious, but, for my part, I don’t mean to die.”

“Nor I either,” said the brave little Juan, taking his stand by my side.

“Up, then, and let us be doing! Why, Sebastian, we still have the planks under our feet, man! Up!” said I to Lydia, whom I raised from her knees; “upon my soul, my child, and so surely as Dr. Neidman has calumniated me, no matter what your life may have been, you are one of God’s creatures, just as we are, and it is an outrage and an insult to Him to believe

that He is going to drown us for your peccadilloes. Once more, Sebastian, my good friend, set us an example. Is not there a canoe on board ?”

The captain stood up and shook himself.

“By my eternal salvation, doctor,” he cried, as he grasped my hand, “you *are* a man ! Let us empty out the canoe, and you shall see whether I know the coast or not.”

The fragile Indian boat, which I had remarked, lay, like the long-boat, under a heap of cotton bales. We set to work to clear it, Doña Esteva and Lydia insisting on helping us. I entrusted to their care the bag of rice, which the fugitives had happily neglected to take with them, and some firewood. An oar was missing ; we had to supply its place by the aid of a bit of tackle used in hoisting the anchor. Thanks to Mexican carelessness, we had neither an axe nor a saw ; one of those implements would have secured our safety by enabling us to cut materials for a raft out of the ship. At length we were

obliged to rest and eat. We had all worked, each for the others, and I remarked that, like the great Emperor Titus, we might declare that we had not lost our day.

"I knew that Titus," said Sebastian; "but no one ever called him 'emperor.' They generally called him the 'one-eyed;' for he had lost his right eye in a dispute with a muleteer. He was a sort of cousin of mine."

Sebastian's blunder made me smile at first; but I soon perceived that I was the only person on board the "*Hirondelle*" who knew the name of the son of Vespasian, of him who conquered Jerusalem, "the joy of the whole earth," and a sense of disdain for all earthly glory stole over me. The weather was splendid; the sky, bathed in golden light, was dazzling, and the sea rocked itself languidly, with the careless grace of a Creole woman.

"To-morrow, with the first beams of day," said I to Doña Esteva, who was

helping me to some rice, "we shall be rowing towards land."

"To-morrow, with the first beams of day," said Sebastian, "we must have reached the shore."

He had just come back from a long look-out towards the horizon, and he seemed anxious.

"Let us embark at once," he added; "the calm which you admire so much, doctor, will not last longer than a woman's whim."

"The south wind will ruffle the sea this evening," continued the captain. "To-morrow it will be the turn of the north wind; and the 'Hirondelle' herself, if the poor little craft were still afloat, would be obliged to fold her wings."

Every one to his own trade. If I venture to differ from Dr. Neidman so far as to believe myself incapable of confounding an *aspergillum* with a *teredo*, I have never set up for understanding the sea better than a sailor; so, instead of replying, I

hastened to throw some ropes into the canoe.

"We are one too many," said the captain roughly, as he glanced at the fragile skiff, and counted us with his eyes.

Doña Esteva and Don Salustio, who were about to step into the canoe, drew back as if moved by the same spring.

"Go, doctor," said the latter, pushing his wife and children towards me. "I confide them to you."

"I will not leave you!" cried the young wife, as she clasped her husband's arm with both hands.

Lydia turned deadly pale. A solemn silence fell upon us; we did not dare to look at each other, or to speak. At last I drew out of my pocket the tubes containing the *aspergillum*; they had been admirably well soldered.

"Your son's fame and my honour are concerned here, señora," said I to Doña Esteva. "Do not forget what I say to you, I entreat. Immediately on your



arrival at Vera Cruz send these tubes to the Boston Institute. Stay, though—it would be better to hand them over to the American consul, informing him of what they contain; he will understand. We shall meet again; the sole object of my precaution is to avoid a loss of time. Nevertheless, if by any chance I do not return, my old servant knows where my will is; in it I explain what is to be done with my collections. When you are in the canoe, Sebastian, you will hand me up a little rice; it will be of more use to me than to you.”

“What do you mean to do, then?” asked the captain.

“To remain quietly here, my good old friend, and wait until you come back to fetch me. The solitude of the ocean has no greater terrors for me than that of the forests in which I lived so long; during your absence I shall sound the sea all round your ship, and who knows what discoveries I shall make! Time is precious, pray set off!”

Lydia, who had come forward, put out her hands to me; I thought she was bidding me farewell.

"I stay with you," she said simply. "Where you are, it is good for me to be."

I meant to repulse her, but, contrary to my intentions, I pressed her to my heart. Emotion, weakness which I could not master, deprived me of my voice. I could not speak. Don Salustio, Doña Esteva, and Sebastian came to us. The two children began to cry; nobody would get into the boat.

"By my faith as a Christian, doctor," said the captain, whose left hand had grasped mine, while, with the thumb and forefinger of the right, he traced a cross in the air, "I spoke too soon and too loud. If the sea remains calm the canoe will carry us all. Don't let us lose time, if you please. All the same, the folk who say you're an oddity, tell no lies."

Doña Esteva got into the boat, Don Salustio followed her, and I passed the

children on to him. Lydia, who was uneasy and suspicious, would not go on before me.


“I should leave you behind without remorse, doctor,” resumed Sebastian, “or, rather, I would remain myself, if I were not convinced that before to-morrow evening the ‘Hirondelle’ will be gone. Don’t take me for a bad seaman because my ship has come to grief; no man can call himself a rider whose horse has never thrown him. In a few hours the north wind will be blowing, and then the walls of San Juan of Ulloa will have enough to do to protect the vessels in harbour. Let us go now, or let us all stay here.”

I yielded. Don Salustio and the children were placed in the bow of the canoe, which was about three yards long; Lydia, Sebastian, and I sat aft. The little craft barely floated above the great abyss, and while vacillating incessantly, obliged us to remain perfectly motionless. Sebastian was right; we were one too many. We cast

a look at the "Hirondelle," Doña Esteva repeated a prayer aloud, and the fragile skiff, intended only to navigate the peaceful current of a river, was being impelled towards that blue line on the horizon which was land.

I confided one of the tubes containing the *aspergillum* to Doña Esteva, and the other to Lydia. Whatever might happen to us, I knew that Don Salustio and Sebastian would give their lives to save the two women. At first I had thought of intrusting the precious deposit to Juan and Lola, for a special star seems to protect children from danger; but they might have jerked the tubes into the sea in play, and it would not do to let Dr. Neidman get the better of me.

When the sun went down we were still too near the "Hirondelle," and yet, notwithstanding the labours of the day, we had rowed vigorously. I had taken care to put the cooked rice and water-melons into the boat; so that we had some supper. The



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children could not understand why we refused to give them water, with so much around them; they were allowed to taste the sea-water, and after that they asked for it no more. The night came—night without a moon; but fortunately the stars shed their light upon the sleeping waves. The unequal stroke of our oars was the only sound that broke the majestic silence of the slumber of the sea. The noctiluæ did not fail to give out their fiery sparks; but the water, suddenly agitated, undulated along the sides of the boat, and I thought of the terrible words of Sebastian. At about three o'clock in the morning we were rowing in utter darkness, and it needed all the keenness of an Indian's senses not to hesitate about the direction to be taken.

“I smell the land,” Sebastian, who seemed to see in the dark, would say to me from time to time.

Presently he left off rowing. I rose to take his place.

"Don't stir," he said, in a low voice.  
"We are caught in a current. Listen!"

Don Salustio, his wife, and the children were sleeping. Lydia, lying in the boat with her head upon my knees, had also yielded to extreme weariness. Of a sudden a light breeze touched the sea, and gently caressed our faces. "We are lost," said Sebastian, laying his hand heavily upon my shoulder; "here comes the wind." I looked at Doña Esteva, as she lay asleep, with a prayer that she might awake no more.

"Let us row," said I.

"We are going towards land—an eddy is driving us there. Presently we shall be within the line of the breakers, and the canoe will fill with water."

"What shall we do?"

"Make our act of contrition, doctor, and hear each other's confession. I said the truth—we are one too many."

Sebastian was no longer rowing. I wanted to stand up—to walk. The interdiction of all motion added to my sufferings.

"Friend," said I, speaking very low, "I can swim. When the time comes, you shall fasten a rope round my body, and I will swim after the boat."

"You would be swept away and drowned, doctor."

Lydia stirred. I felt the arm which clasped my knees contract. I nudged Sebastian, as a hint to him to keep silence; and he began to row very slowly. After a few minutes, I spoke to my companion again. I had had time to reflect.

"The sacrifice of my life is made. It would be too foolish to condemn all these young creatures to perish on account of a useless old man of my sort. We will try the experiment. Perhaps it may not cost me so dear as you think. When we are close to the breakers I will try to swim. I will cling to the first bit of rock which I find under my hand, and you will come and pick me up when your precious cargo is in safety. Don't answer me—think of your

wife and children. What I propose is reasonable. Now row."

Lydia stirred once more, and her movement prevented Sebastian from replying. He contented himself with taking my hand, which he squeezed ruthlessly. At about four o'clock the puffs of wind became more frequent. Don Salustio, heavy and numbed with sleep and exposure, took his turn at the oars. He remarked that the sea was growing rough. Sebastian sat by my side.

"Daylight!—Oh, if daylight would but come!" he muttered, turning his head towards the east; and then he suddenly called out, "Cease rowing!" Lydia sat up; Sebastian bent his head and listened. "Are you still resolved?" said he.

I answered by a nod; and he picked up a rope, and held it out to me. My heart beat fitfully, but I thought of the many perils I had escaped, and did not despair of coming out of this one also. A purple line marked the limit of the horizon; the



surface of the sea was tinged with red ; the reefs, covered with foam showed themselves a few cable-lengths ahead of us.

“ Now row ! ” shouted Sebastian to Don Salustio.

Lydia leaned towards me. “ For you and for them,” said she distinctly, pointing to the children ; then, uttering the name of Valerio, she threw herself backwards and sank beneath the waves.

I flung myself forward, and was struck on the head and blinded by the water, while a strong arm seized and flung me into the bottom of the boat.

“ Lydia ! ” I exclaimed, as soon I had recovered my senses.

“ God has been satisfied with one victim,” answered the grave voice of Sebastian. “ We are saved ! ”

We were floating on a sheet of calm water, gilded by the rising sun, and its gentle undulation was carrying us to the shore.

“ On your knees ! on your knees ! ”

cried. "Did you not understand that she gave her life to save us, that she—"

I could not say more. I sat down utterly overpowered, while Sebastian, who had guessed the truth, narrated, in his simple but expressive language, the devoted and heroic deed of poor Lydia.

We reached the shore, and had only to go to one of the farms a little way inland.

I bade adieu to my companions; I would not leave the beach until the sea should have given me up its prey.

"There are two of us, doctor," said Dona Esteva. "I also will wait."

We waited in vain.

I found the *aspergillum* which I had entrusted to Lydia in my pocket, into which she had slipped it. European classifiers are sometimes very unscrupulous about changing or modifying the names of objects of natural history which are sent to them from abroad. My motive for relating the story of poor Lydia's death in all its

details, is that I may entreat my brother naturalists to respect the name *Aspergillum Lydianum*, which I have given, with the full consent of Doña Esteva Mendez, to the beautiful mollusc discovered by her son.

**COLONEL RAMON.**

1. 1. 1.

2. 2. 2.

3. 3. 3.

4. 4. 4.

5. 5. 5.

6. 6. 6.

7. 7. 7.

8. 8. 8.

9. 9. 9.

10. 10. 10.

## CHAPTER I.

DID the Toltecs, in the course of their wanderings, cross the Isthmus of Panama? Did they, like the barbarian tribes of the North of Europe, march inexorably towards the south, drawn thither by the irresistible charm of southern lands? This is a problem difficult to solve, for the civilization of the Toltecs was of an advanced kind, and no people was ever known to abandon, when its greatness was in the zenith, the territory on which it dwelt. Removals of this kind have always been the result of catastrophes, and Torquemada when he asserts—

My meditation was suddenly and rudely interrupted by distant firing; two or three

balls ricocheted on the roof of my house, splitting the tiles with a sharp little noise; and a cluster of ants, no doubt disturbed in their task of tunnelling through the beam which crossed the ceiling just above my head, tumbled down in a fright upon my open books.

Orizava had been besieged for four days past by the Liberals; and the Conservatives, who occupied the town, believed themselves to be impregnable. We had ample supplies of Indian corn, flour, rice, and cattle; ditches had been dug at the entrance of the principal streets, and reinforcements from Mexico were expected. Happily the besiegers were badly off for munitions of war, and, unless by a fortunate accident, they would find it no easy matter to dislodge the two thousand soldiers of the line commanded by General Nègrété.

It had been ascertained, on the second day of the investment of the place, that there was a scarcity of money in the

treasure-chest of the army. The General, who was a man of resources, remedied that evil in less than two hours. The "notables"—I was one of that meek flock—received an order—an invitation, I mean—to present themselves at the Town Hall without delay. The matter in hand was merely the taking of the necessary measures for preventing the pillage of our houses, either by the famished bands from without, in the case of their getting into the city, or by the troops within, in the event of their not being paid. After a touching appeal to our well-trying patriotism, the General begged us to lend him, under the guarantee of his signature, which the Supreme Government could not fail to honour, a round sum of one hundred thousand francs.

Mexican patriotism is apt to be rather lukewarm on occasions of this kind, which occur pretty frequently. And then our confidence in the signature, which was offered to us in exchange for our piastres,



was so correctly estimated by the commandant, that he had drawn up beforehand a list of the sums which each of us was to deposit. Of course the General reckoned upon our patriotism; nevertheless, as everything ought to be foreseen, a paragraph, at the top of the list, announced that every bad citizen should have his hair cut, a soldier's helmet placed on his head, and a place in the vanguard assigned to him on the first alarm. This was not a vain threat; General Nègrété disdained to jest.

When one finds oneself, either by accident or one's own fault, in the jaws of the wolf, there is no good in protesting or in screaming; the only thing to be done is to get out again, bitten as little as possible. For my own part, I pleaded that I was a foreigner, and therefore bound to abstain from mixing myself up in any way with the internal quarrels of the Mexican nation. I had friends in both camps; should I be permitted to aid those in the one at the expense of those in the other? Again,

what would the French Minister say to this breach of the treaty, by which French residents in Mexico are dispensed from contributing to forced loans.

The General listened patiently to my discourse. He held his head downwards, and occasionally shook it slowly in an approving manner. When I had said my say, he replied to my objections with perfect courtesy. He deprecated indeed the use of the term "forced loan," as applied by me to a purely patriotic measure; but he quite understood my scruples; he, too, had friends in both camps. He would, however, authorize me to place, on occasion, in the hands of the Liberals, a sum equal to that which I was about to advance to him. As for the French Minister, he would protest at first, and then he would come to an understanding with the Supreme Government. Was not this his business? After all, what was the good of debating the matter? I was a *savant*—here I made a gesture of disavowal, to which the

General paid no heed—and although he himself was only an ignorant man, a soldier, he had an admiration which amounted to a positive weakness for those practical men who passed their lives in reading, and therefore I might have remarked that I had been taxed at a figure considerably below that at which the contributions of the other “notables” were fixed. I bowed, paid five hundred francs instead of one thousand—which proves that there is some good in science—and went home to endeavour to find the key to an Aztec inscription which had been recently discovered by two woodcutters, people for whom chance seems to reserve good fortune of this kind.

During my visit to the General I had remarked, standing near him, a tall man, with light hair, broad shoulders, a stiff moustache, and heavy eyebrows; a man who looked like a European, and whom I took to be a German. While the General was haranguing us, the stranger was

glancing at us with dull, stealthy, undecided looks. His white pink-tinged skin puzzled me; in Mexico every one has either the complexion that is called "mat" or the complexion that is called "bistré." He leaned carelessly against a console-table. A cavalry sword hung at his side; he wore a jacket of blue cloth with black braid; and every now and then he would take his under lip between his finger and thumb, and by the movement show us his sound, sharp teeth, which were separated like those of certain beasts of prey. Before I went to the General's quarters I would have readily undertaken to tell the names of all his aides-de-camp—there were twenty of them—but this fair-skinned officer was unknown to me. I could not doubt that he was a new arrival, but how had he got into the city through the enemy's lines?

"This time, doctor, you will not complain of us," said a lieutenant to me, just as I had reached the street-door.

"H'm. You don't know, perhaps, that my visit costs me a hundred piastres?"

"You have the esteem of the General, and his signature, in exchange."

"I appreciate the value of his esteem," I replied prudently; "but tell me the name of that foreign officer."

"Foreign officer! There is not one in the garrison!"

"What! Do you mean me to believe that fair man, with a straight forehead, blue eyes, and big feet, to be a compatriot of yours? Germany claims him, lieutenant; the Saxon race has characteristic signs which cannot deceive even the humblest member of the Anthropological Society."

"You mean, I suppose, Colonel Ramon?"

"I mean the man who has this moment come out on the balcony."

"That is the Colonel. He came through the Liberal camp yesterday to join us. You must know his wife and children? They have been living in Orizava for several months past. He is a good soldier, doctor,

this Colonel Ramon, and your friends the Liberals grudge him to us. He is 'as brave as the sword he wears,' as we say in Mexico, and ought to have been a general long ago."

"Is he German or American?"

"He is Mexican, if you please."

"Then his father was European?"

"Neither his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather, that I know of. Why will you insist upon it, doctor, that no one is born white except in the Old World? I am a Puebla man, and you are actually from Paris, since you are French; and pray what difference do you see between your skin and mine?"

This was a most delicate and touchy point of controversy. Man is no less self-deceiving with respect to his physical than with respect to his moral qualities. Each people has its own especial foible: every citizen of the United States calls himself a colonel; every Frenchman holds that he is deserving of a decoration; every Mexican

piques himself, rightfully or wrongfully, on having a fair skin. I therefore immediately acquiesced in my friend's view; social life would be impossible without those concessions which Alceste called cowardly.

When I got home, and was about to resume my translation of the hieroglyphs discovered by the woodman (his baptismal name was "John-of-God"), I could not keep from thinking of the dull, melancholy face of this Colonel Ramon, as he stood listening in impassive silence to the remonstrances of his own compatriots and myself, and mechanically pinching his under lip between his finger and thumb all the time.

However well used one may be to the vicissitudes of a siege—and this was the fourth time within a year that Orizava had experienced them—a certain uneasiness, of which it is impossible to rid oneself, especially when one possesses collections which may be destroyed at any moment by an ill-directed bombshell, always does

deprive one more or less of self-possession. The houses in Mexico are solidly constructed; as a necessary precaution against earthquakes, they consist of only one story—the exception confirms the rule—and are usually formed of four walls, one yard in thickness, three in height, covered in with heavy beams of wood laden with round tiles. In these stone thimbles one is sheltered from balls, until the enemy gets possession of a church, establishes himself in the bell-tower, and fires downwards on the town. There is an hour for everything in Mexico; no fighting is ever done at night; sunset is the signal for truce. It was near the end of May, the heat was unendurable, and, as I could not study in the daytime on account of the perpetual alarms, I took advantage of the hours during which both Conservatives and Liberals kept quiet, to occupy myself with my great work, *The Toltecs and their Migrations*.

In ordinary times I worked at the open



window. Whether the light comes from the moon, from the stars, or from rays thrown out from the ground, which has been intolerably heated during the day, the nights in the tropics never are quite dark. How often have I, forgetting my task for a while, let my gaze wander to the wooded mountains which I could see from my cabinet, and lose itself there! The trees on the mountain-tops stood out in strange, fantastic form, now against the dark-blue sky, then against a band of white mist, like a fringe of silver. To the branches, shaken by the night-wind, as well as to the clouds, imagination lends a thousand forms. What immense spaces has my spirit passed through in a few moments of forgetfulness! From the recesses of the primeval forest I descended again into the plain, near to those huge tumuli which hold within them so many secrets of the past, and I asked myself whether the key to the enigma of the Toltec migrations was not buried there

under that mass of earth, which should one day be investigated by an explorer more wealthy than I. Crossing the ocean, as though on wings, my imagination would often bear me to Paris, to the Institute, under whose dome I would find myself, about to read my treatise—concluded at last—before the Academy of Sciences, which had been summoned by its Dean. “Gentlemen,” said I—and then I went no farther; but found myself again, by a strange freak of fancy, on the banks of the Rhine, where, as an infant, I learned to walk. Nothing less impressive would have sufficed to tear me away from that dream of my country than a thunderbolt, like that which set fire one evening to the church of St. John of God, and melted all the wreaths of gilded copper around the heads of the images of the saints, making, however, an exception of that of St. Martin, who must not by any means be treated disrespectfully at Orizava. Another evening, it was the mere humming of an insect that

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recalled me to reality ; and I captured that beautiful *chrysina* with emerald *elitra*, to which European *savants* have given my name.

On the present occasion, when the balls had ricocheted on the tiles, struck one of the beams of the roof, and covered my books with small fragments of wood and a few unlucky termites, I looked up quickly from my work, and held my breath to listen. What did these explosions and these projectiles mean ? Was this a signal, a surprise, an alarm, or simply some random firing on the part of drunken soldiers ? There was no further sound. In a corner of the room was a cricket chirping to his lady-love, undisturbed by human misadventures ; outside, a night-watchman was calling the hour in melancholy tones. I was somewhat reassured ; but yet I thought it prudent to change my place, and get into a corner. Spent balls are more to be dreaded than is generally supposed ; in Mexico they kill a greater number of the

harmless inhabitants than are despatched by the soldiers; and it is not the fault of chance that I am still living.

The termites of America are very imperfectly known. About a century ago, Smeathman described the African species, and his work is still regarded as an authority. In the essays of M. de Quatrefages upon the colony of those insects which took possession of La Rochelle, he has thrown light upon one side only of their history. The *neuropteræ planipennæ* which had just tumbled down upon my books belonged to a family as yet undescribed, and they did not seem in the least disturbed by their fall. One of the ants on which I concentrated my attention described, at first, a succession of circles; then, travelling up to the top of the page, he seemed to hesitate, opened and closed his mandibles, and came down again with the slowness of a person who seeks the solution of a problem. About the middle of the page the traveller paused, and then

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began to travel crosswise along the lines. The deep gulf that separated page 211 from page 210 caused him evident surprise; he retraced his steps in haste. I crossed his path with my pen-handle to bring him back, and he did precisely the same as he had done before. I began to take a note of this fact, whose importance will be apparent to all who are engaged in scientific pursuits, and especially in the study of entomology. The scrupulous carefulness which explains the favour with which the Academies receive my treatises, induced me to repeat the experiment. If the ant should travel backwards a third time, a curious observation would certainly be added to the history of the habits of the tribe. The innocent insect was in motion, and I was watching it with profound attention. Would it clear the space?

A terrible fusillade broke the stillness. I jumped up, and crouched under the shelter of the walls. The balls whistled,

the dull roar of cannon followed, all the window-panes shook and clattered. A quarter of an hour elapsed without any abatement of the noise—a century to a passive listener. I heard the sound of trumpets, then loud shouts, quite near. Presently several horses passed at a gallop. Was the town taken? I put my lamp out—it might serve as a firing-point for the enemy—and perceived, to my amazement, that day had dawned. The sight of the sunlight emboldened me; I opened my window; the firing had ceased. Some half-clad soldiers were marching past; they belonged to the garrison; and I presently learned that the Liberals had attacked one of our entrenchments, but had been repulsed with loss, and that a flag and fifty prisoners had been taken.

Shouts of “Long live Religion and the Supreme Government!” and “Long live Liberty!” filled the air. Presently I saw a man mounted on a grey horse, his head bound up with a handkerchief spotted with

blood, advancing into the crowd, surrounded by a number of young officers who were cheering him vociferously. The officer was Colonel Ramon. He it was who had foreseen the attack, repulsed the assault, pursued the enemy back to his camp, and taken the colours. As he passed by, I observed that his grave, sad, impassive face wore the same expression as when, leaning against the console-table in the Hôtel de Ville, he had heard his General "borrowing" five hundred francs from me. Our eyes met, and he saluted me. Presently there was a *feu de joie*; the drums beat, the bells clashed out, the trumpets sounded with their bravest "blare," and the people crowded round the drummers and trumpeters, shouting and applauding tumultuously. They were celebrating a victory, and I was thinking of going to bed; but before I fell asleep I had read once more what Ixtlilxochitl has written concerning the Toltecs, and after my eyes were closed I continued

to see the dull sad features of Colonel Ramon.

Decidedly the face of that man was unlike any other, and it had impressed me strangely.



## CHAPTER II.

IN his learned and cumbrous *History of the Indian Monarchy*, printed for the second time at Madrid in 1723, Torquemada states that the Toltecs, on taking possession of Mexico, came upon the traces of a race of giants. In their traditions the Toltecs preserved the remembrance of a deluge, and it was held as a belief among them that the world would be destroyed anew, but by fire. Torquemada, a Franciscan monk, seeks to establish that the Bible—

Heavens! what a racket! and what a troublesome invention is that odious gun-powder! The firing went on without a pause, a field-piece bellowing out its deadly

roar now and again, while the echo transmitted the sound from hill to hill. Orizava is situated in the midst of a smiling valley ; on all sides of it are flowery slopes with wooded crests ; and between each cleft a lofty peak is visible, dim in the distance. Afar off is the snow-covered volcano, which seems to lean over that it may espy the windings in the plain of the innumerable streams that flow downwards from its sides. The Indians, dwelling among those distant peaks, inaccessible to any foot but theirs, count the musket-shots which are echoed back from the town ; the discharges of the field-piece, if the laws of acoustics are not false, must sound to them like a prolonged peal of thunder. In the time of the Toltecs—

A horse is pulled up abruptly under my windows ; several hurried blows are struck upon my door. Some one is impatient—

“ Who is there ? ’ I asked loudly.

“ Open the door, doctor ; open the door ! ”

"Give me time, then. In no country that I know of are the doors opened before they've been knocked at. And besides, now that I think of it, who are you?"

"Diego Peralta, and I want you to come and extract a bullet that has hit my captain in the stomach, and lodged there. He is in danger of death, doctor. Make haste, or I will break in your door."

"My house," said I, as I took off the chain which served to reinforce the lock, "is that of a foreign citizen, a Frenchman, a physician."

"And it is in that double quality that I have come to fetch you. He is bleeding, señor, and our surgeons have all lost their heads. Open the door, in God's name!"

The chain fell, and I found myself face to face with a sub-lieutenant of my acquaintance. The flame of my lamp lighted up his pale agitated face; his black eyes shone with a feverish brilliance.

"Get up behind," he said; "we have not a minute to lose."

"Give me time to get my instrument-case at least."

"You must not, doctor; it is not instruments that our surgeons lack."

"My hat—"

"The night is warm, and I will lend you mine."

"You must acknowledge," said I, as I hoisted myself up with some difficulty on the croup of my unceremonious visitor's horse, "that the new fashion of fighting at night is very disagreeable; soon one will not know when to take one's books with any chance of peace and quietness."

"Hold tight, doctor."


The caution was timely, for the horse started off at a gallop.

We passed through the deserted streets; the sky was full of shooting stars: they might have been taken for the distant "bouquet" of a display of fireworks. The continuous cracking of the musketry seemed to come nearer, and to proceed from the direction of the Angostura Gate, towards

which my companion urged his noble horse at the top of its speed.

“Where the devil are you taking me to?” I gasped, breathless from the combined effect of our headlong pace and the constraint of my position.

The lieutenant did not seem to hear me. Occasionally a bright flame flashed out; the field-piece was vomiting its deadly contents, to which the fire of musketry responded; the bullets whistled about me with a most annoying and disagreeable noise. We passed near a great fire lighted behind a hut; the General was there; a crowd of people stood about him transmitting his rapid orders. Again I questioned my companion, who still pushed forward, bending over his horse's neck, and either did not hear or would not reply to my questions. Was this intended for a rough practical joke? Was he taking me to the front? I had paid my contribution; I was not going to stand this; and was just about to protest loudly, when the horse



was pulled up close by a trench. Leaning over the parapet, and facing the enemy, stood Colonel Ramon. A bandage across his forehead came almost down to his hard cold eyes. His figure was lighted up from time to time by sudden gleams, and a very impressive one it was. Around me were a group of hardy soldiers, who kept their chief well in sight. All about the General were bustling and noisy; all here were observant and silent.

“Where have they taken the captain to?” asked my guide of a sergeant.

“The captain? He has been dead these ten minutes,” replied a voice.

The lieutenant hurled a horrible imprecation at the head of the enemy, then took his cap off, and made the sign of the cross on his breast with great solemnity.

I remarked that we only were on horseback, that a full half of our bodies was above the parapet, and that a ball—

I had not time to conclude. Our horse reared up on his hind legs, and fell head-

long down. I rose from the ground, bruised and giddy.

“Attention! Reserve your fire!” said the Colonel, and his voice was as calm as his face.

I saw him draw his sword. I heard a confused clamour, then a hideous din; it was impossible to distinguish, to understand anything. Cries, oaths, appeals to the Virgin, and a continuous whistling were among the sounds. Suddenly there came a dead silence.

“Stand firm, my children!”

“Forward! Forward!”

“Long live Religion!”

“Long live Liberty!”

Did I run, did I roll, or did some one push me? Had the instinct of preservation guided me? I cannot tell; all I know is, that I found myself at the bottom of a dry ditch, that fighting was going on around me, and that there was firing on all sides.

“Victory!” shouted the Colonel.

"Victory!" echoed the soldiery.

I endeavoured to gain my feet; but a volley came from the right, and I sank down again into my ditch. The soldiers who were nearest to me, the upper part of whose bodies I could see, let fall their arms, while some dropped in a heap where they stood, others fell forward, and others backward. A few staggering as though drunk, moved about aimlessly.

"Malediction! We are turned."

Colonel Ramon appeared on the edge of the ditch, shading his eyes with his hand, as he tried to pierce the darkness.

"Fire!" he shouted, and stretched out his arm. It was the enemy who responded to his order.

"We are betrayed!" cried a young aide-de camp; "the Liberals are in the city."

The Colonel looked around him; his soldiers were flying; he was alone. He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, muttering, "Always traitors!"



Then he quietly replaced his sword in its scabbard, picked up a soldier's cloak, threw it over his shoulders, and I watched him as he walked away into the city, where the bells were beginning to clash and clang uproariously. A detachment came up close to the trench ; it consisted of partisans of General Slave, who had been besieging us for the last two weeks. The horsemen entered the streets by squadrons and disappeared ; but they had previously set fire to a bamboo hut, and the flames lighted the field of battle. I stood up in my ditch and surveyed the scene. About thirty men, killed or wounded, lay on the ground. The firing had ceased ; the bells of the parish church were ringing ; the Liberals were certainly in the heart of the town. Then came more tramping of horses' hoofs ; this time the riders were Slave and his staff. He pulled up close by the burning hut. Soldiers in white jackets came swarming from all sides shouting, " Long live Religion ! Long live

Liberty! Long live the Supreme Government!"

"Ah," thought I, "the handle is changed, but the spade is the same! Since the time of the Toltecs how much blood has been vainly poured out upon this land, which would be an earthly paradise but for the discord between its inhabitants! Here they fight neither for an idea, nor for glory, nor for—"

A ditch is a bad place to philosophize in. Leaving my reflection unfinished, I endeavoured to get out of the hiding-place into which chance had pushed me for my salvation.

"Has Nègrété been taken," asked Slave.

"No, General; he is retreating toward the Pearl defile, and if our soldiers pursued him, they would be shot down one by one."

"And the Colonel?"

"No one has seen him; but we have taken his horse."

“Let proclamation be made at sunrise that a reward of ten thousand piastres will be given for him, alive or dead.”

Although I was suffering from a severe bruise on the leg, which was very painful, and prevented me from climbing up the side of my ditch so quickly as I should have wished, I could not repress a movement of disgust on hearing this. Colonel Ramon was a brave soldier. I had just seen him under fire, and I could not explain to myself the imprudence which led him to return into the city, when a few steps would have taken him to a field of sugar-cane hard by, beyond which lay the forest. At this moment two fellows seized me roughly by the collar, and, without taking any notice of my explanations, dragged me towards the staff.

“A prisoner, General!” they cried simultaneously.

“Permit me, gentlemen—” I began, when I had fetched my breath.

“Good heavens, doctor, what are you

doing here ? ” asked the General as he rode forward to meet me, and put out his hand.

“ Nothing, I am very sorry to say,” I replied; “ and I candidly confess, General, that I should prefer to be quietly at home.”

“ Do you then serve the enemies of the nation ? ”

“ I serve God first, as your compatriots say, and after Him, Science, when I am left at leisure. Just think, General, I was working at that essay on the Toltecs, about which you were formerly kind enough—”

“ Was it not Colonel Ramon who commanded this post ? ” asked the General, interrupting me.

“ Yes—at least I think I heard so.”

“ A fair man. Do you not know him ? ”

“ I have seen him three times ; but, from the first, I noticed that peculiarity.”

“ Which way did he go ? ”

“ Upon my honour, General, if you were to ask me how I myself got into that ditch,

I should find it very hard to explain. You may judge, therefore—”

“I understand you, doctor. Good-bye for the present.”

The General galloped away. The two soldiers who had pulled me out of the ditch now seized me anew by the collar.

“Are you drunk, you fellows?” cried I.

“You must come along with us,” said one of them; “you are our prisoner.”

“Have you not seen that I am the friend of your General?”

“He did not tell us to let you go,” replied the other as he tried to pull my watch out of my waistcoat-pocket.

Although I am a Frenchman, and come from the neighbourhood of Strasburg, I am of a calm and pacific temperament. The watch that the fellow wanted to deprive me of had belonged to Humboldt—the author who, according to Captain Mayne Reid, has written the greatest number of untruths about America—and I prized it almost as highly as I prized my

essay on the Toltecs. I struck the robber a violent blow with my clenched fist, and, as his comrade clapped his hand to his sword, I recalled to timely remembrance the Spanish proverb, "He who strikes first strikes twice," and snatching a musket, I dealt him a stroke with the stock, which made him both howl and reflect. My two rascals took to their heels. I flung down my weapon, and reflecting on the truly disagreeable occurrences of the last two hours, I determined that I would go quietly home.

Groans from some wounded men close by reached me, and I forgot my resolution. There was a case of a wound with the sword-bayonet which astonished me; it had divided the tissues of the abdomen, without injuring the essential organs, with all the precision and intelligence of a knife in the hands of Dupuytren. I also admired a ball, which, having hit a man in the temple, ran round the *os frontis* without harming it; but this case seemed less

curious to me than the other. I was presently aided in my task by a captain and some soldiers. The first proceeding of the captain was to administer to each of the dying men a huge glassful of that cane-brandy vulgarly called *chiriguerito*, which causes, it is well known, a silent and gloomy intoxication.

The sun had long been above the horizon when I betook myself to my own dwelling, worn out with fatigue, and a prey to nervous emotion, which was no doubt due to the agitation of the night. I drew near to my own house. The streets were still empty, and the doors closed. Some Creoles, who were unaware that all was over, still remained in hiding behind the shutters and rails of their windows. One of these people called out to me, when I was recognized,—

“What has happened?”

“We are under the Liberal *régime*.”

“Ah! Do you know whether the troops have money?”

“ I believe not.”

My questioners shook their heads ruefully. They lacked patriotism, according to the expression of General Nègrété.

At this moment a band of the vanquished passed by me, shouting, at the pitch of their voices, “ Long live the Nation! Long live Liberty! Long live the Supreme Government!” Just what they had shouted the day before! Only that yesterday the Supreme Government meant Miramon, whereas to-day it meant Juarez.

Two corporals came after the tumultuous band, and I caught what they were saying.

“ He was found under a heap of maize-straw,” said one.

“ A good job for the lucky devil who found him,” said the other.

“ Yes; but for all that, he will eat bread which I should not like to taste. Didn't he defend himself stoutly when he was taken ! ”

“ Who has been taken ? ” I asked of the men.



“Colonel Ramon, señor. He will be shot to-morrow.”

Colonel Ramon ! I was ignorant of his past, his life, his opinions, and yet he interested me. I remembered that he had a wife and children. It was to see them once more, to bid them adieu, that he had gone back into the city, instead of taking to flight. Poor Colonel ! Of one thing at least I felt sure : he would die bravely.

### CHAPTER III.

THE Liberals had been in occupation of the city for six weeks, and the new commandant had put the patriotism of the "notables" to the proof by borrowing from them several thousands of piastres on Government security. The end of June was near, the heat was more intolerable than usual, and we were all longing for the rainy season. Lastly, we were at peace for the moment. Nègrété, who was now our enemy, was making expeditions in the neighbourhood of Puebla. Colonel Ramon, who was not taken, though rumour had asserted his capture, had not been shot; and it was considered very probable that he was still commanding the cavalry of his

former chief, although his name did not figure on any report. The great animosity of the Liberals against the Colonel was due entirely to his bravery and his military talents. He was quoted as a hero by the Conservatives, and denounced as a dangerous man by the Liberals, who could not forgive him for having beaten them twenty times.

Thanks to the temporary tranquillity of the city, I had been able to resume my old custom of going to bed at ten o'clock, and rising at dawn, so as to devote several hours to my work before my patients arrived. On the 10th June, 1864, while I was, for the hundredth time, turning over the contents of the library of the Convent of St. Joseph of Grace, I came by chance upon a dusty manuscript at the bottom of a drawer. According to a memorandum upon the cover, this was a narrative of travel written seventy-five years previously, by a monk, during a mission to the savages of California. The document might be a

precious one, and before classifying it among the manuscripts committed to the keeping of Brother Angelo, I wished to glance through it. I opened it, and read:—

“That evening the Indians took us to see a stupendous ruin. It was one of those immense places of shelter which were constructed by the Toltecs during their march towards Analmac; and the following day I collected the information, which I am now about to detail, concerning the history of that people whose name signifies ‘architect.’”

My hands trembled, my heart beat, my knees knocked together; the emotion which I experienced on reading those lines was overpowering. The good father-custodian of the convent thought I was suddenly taken ill.

“An unpublished work upon the Toltecs!” I exclaimed, flourishing the manuscript over my head.

The monk smiled at my enthusiasm; he

did not concern himself with the things of this world, and he authorized me to carry away the precious manuscript. In my gratitude I kissed his hand, after the Mexican fashion of saluting a priest.

I placed my treasure in my breast, and buttoned my coat over it; I felt as if it could not be safe anywhere except in my cabinet. When I got home I found the father of little Alonzo and the wife of Perez Gomez waiting for me, and I had to attend to them on the instant. After my dinner, which I ate hastily, one of my colleagues paid me a visit. How I cursed him, poor man! Fortunately our curses do not influence the even course of things; if he had broken an arm or a leg on leaving me I should have thought myself guilty; so that, since that time, I have forbidden myself to indulge in any thoughts of that kind.

At length, at ten o'clock at night, I found myself at liberty, really free, and I spread out the manuscript upon my desk.

The document was in a state of perfect preservation. On the first page was a cross drawn with a pen, and underneath it were these simple words, written in firm round hand as legible as print: "Relacion del viage de fray Rafael, de la orden de nuestro padre San Francisco, 1665 to 1670, escrita por el mismo."

I took notes as I read, and, at about half-past twelve, I had reached the famous passage which would bring me into the midst of my subject, the Toltecs. I paused in thought for an instant, and, just as I was about to resume my pen, there came a loud knock at the door.

"It is a mistake," said I to myself.

But it was not so; my Indian servant, who, after the fashion of the men of his race, slept on the tiles in the corridor, was talking to somebody through the trap in the door. Presently he came into my cabinet, and said,—

"A gentleman wants to speak to you, señor."

"Let the gentleman go to the— Who is he?"

"I don't know him; he says he is ill, and wants to see you."

"Let him in, then."

I had barely had time to shut up the *Relacion de fray Rafael* in my desk when a tall man, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a large grey cloak, entered the room. He shut the door abruptly on my Indian, and came forward with some hesitation.

"Good," thought I; "this is some bandit who has been robbing a diligence, has got a bullet into him, and wants the wound dressed in secret."

My visitor took his hat off. I started up. Colonel Ramon stood before me.

"I know, doctor," said he, in a grave voice, "that your honour and your humanity may be trusted."

I bowed. I was so taken aback that I could not speak.

"Do you consent to accompany me?" resumed the Colonel, "I wish to take

you to see three persons, dear to me, who are ill."

"I am at your service, Colonel."

"Do not give me that title," said he, shaking his head; "at this moment it might cost me my life, and other lives depend on mine." I took up my hat.

"I ought to tell you beforehand, doctor," said the Colonel, and his voice trembled slightly, "that I may not be able to recompense your care for some months."

"That does not matter, señor. Dr. Bernagius—"

"Is as humane as he is learned, I know. Listen to me, then; it is to my wife and children that I want to take you, and medicines will be needed. Now, though my head is worth ten thousand piastres, I do not possess a sou."

"Never mind about that, Col—señor, I mean. Let us go."

But a thought struck me, and I opened a small bureau, in which I kept some ready money.



"Take what you want, Colonel," said I. "You will really oblige me by doing so."

The Colonel's eyelids drooped, and I saw that his eyes moistened. He laid a trembling hand on one of the piles of money, slipped it into the pocket of his jacket, the same blue jacket with black braid which he wore at the General's, and in the trench.

"On my honour," said he, making the sign of the cross, "I, or mine, will repay you in the future for the bread which you give us to-day."

He wrapped himself in his cloak, passed out before me, and five minutes later we were in the suburb of Pichocalco. Just as we turned into the narrow lane a night-watchman, armed with a halberd and a lantern, approached us.

"Blessed are the eyes that see you, doctor," said he, on recognizing me; "I will escort you."

"Do not take that trouble, my good Geronimo; I am almost at my destination."

"Who is ill, then?" asked Geronimo, as he turned the light of his lantern full on the Colonel.

"My wife," answered the latter, in a steady voice.

"I will take you safe home, doctor; let us go on."

"No, no, indeed you need not. I shall not return until daylight."

"At all events I will escort you to this gentleman's dwelling; the quarter is not safe, and what would be said in the city, good Heaven! if any harm were to come to your grace?"

The deuce take over-zeal! How were we to get rid of this good fellow, who all the time kept his eyes on my companion, being doubtless much surprised that he did not recognize him? Geronimo was an honest "alguazil;" but he had only one idea, his duty, and the Colonel's head was worth ten thousand piastres! If chance does not come to our aid—


A shrill whistle sounded; we turned, and

saw a light in the distance whirling round in a circle. This is the signal in use among the night-watchmen when help is needed.

“Knives are out at Galvez the tailor’s!” exclaimed Geronimo. “A curse on fandangoes and females! Where shall you be, doctor? We are very likely to want you to sew up a hole in somebody’s skin.”

“Twenty yards from here, at my fellow-countryman’s.”

Geronimo lowered his lantern, looked at me—my ready lie seemed to have solved a problem for him—and ran off. A lie! Was it altogether one? It is true that the Colonel spoke the purest Spanish; but his fair hair, his white skin, his robust limbs were European. Unless indeed—what an idea! And yet—are not their buildings there to prove it?—the type of the Toltecs differed completely from that of the Aztecs. Could it be that, across the ages, a specimen —



"Take care, doctor."

The Colonel's warning was timely; I was just about to knock up against a hedge of prickly cactus.

"It is fortunate," said I to my companion, "that they are fighting down at Galvez the tailor's; I was beginning to get anxious about Geronimo's obstinacy."

"And I should have been sorry if I had been obliged to crack the poor fellow's skull."

"What!"

"Did you imagine," replied the Colonel, with perfect composure, "that I should have allowed myself to be taken?"

I heard him uncock a pistol underneath his cloak, and the roughness of the path obliged me to step carefully. We were walking along the edge of a small wood, and had left the houses far behind. Cocks were crowing, and dogs were howling in the distance. I followed my guide into a tumbledown hut, and there, in a corner, I saw a young woman lying on a mat.

Her large eyes were burning with fever, and she held two little shivering children to her breast.

I was deeply moved by this spectacle. Poverty, in Mexico, seldom wears so sordid and terrible a form as that. One felt that hunger reigned in that wretched dwelling, and noisome vapours rose from the damp, rough floor. I questioned and examined the sufferers. The children looked at me with alarm, and their mother also seemed uneasy. She turned her eyes every moment towards her husband, who followed my movements with close attention, while he held a lighted wooden torch.

"Nothing serious," said I, after a few minutes; "they will all be quite well in a week."

The tension of the Colonel's features relaxed; he bent down and kissed his wife. Then I learned that she had been living in that wretched place for a month, cared for by two poor Indian women, her neighbours. Twenty times, by day and night,

her miserable hut had been surrounded, in the hope of surprising her husband. I strove to cheer her, to restore some calmness to her excited brain.

"Make him go away, doctor," said she.

"Why did you not call me in sooner, Colonel?"

"You forget that I am proscribed," he answered.

We left the hut and entered the wood, through which I followed him mechanically. Every now and then we had to push aside the branches in order to get on. The Colonel stopped close to a forsaken lime-kiln; there he had lived since the capture of the city by the Liberals, stealing down in the evening to the cabin in which his wife and children dwelt.

I took leave of Colonel Ramon at day-break, after a long discussion upon the best means of conveying to my patients the food and medicines which they would require, without attracting dangerous at-

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tention. He wanted to guide me to the edge of the wood, and I had great difficulty in dissuading him from doing so. The wood was neither so extensive nor so thick that I could not find my way back. I was not very far on my road when I met two half-breeds. What were they doing in that place at such an hour? I was tempted to retrace my steps; but, suppose they should be spies? I stooped down, and pretended to be gathering plants. The two half-breeds went on and disappeared; they did not even look back towards me. I breathed freely again, and presently I uttered an exclamation of joy, for among the plants which I had pulled up merely to disarm suspicion, I recognized a small species of valerian described by the celebrated Hernandez. I lost a good hour in seeking for a second specimen of the plant, and I emerged from the wood close by the Ceritos de San Juan, which are mounds raised by the hands of men, possibly Toltecs. I walked alongside the wood back

towards Orizava, and I perceived the two half-breeds seated at the foot of a guava-tree. They looked up and saluted me. I felt that I turned pale, like a criminal, and my heart beat quickly. The Colonel's hiding-place seemed to me too easy of discovery. I would rather not have known it. A drove of bulls came in sight; the half-breeds rose, threw their *serapés* over their left shoulders, and joined the drover. This explained their presence; the half-breeds were stockmen, and had come there to take charge of the cattle that had just passed. No doubt they lived at Pichocalco, and had crossed the wood as a short cut to their post.

I went home with an easy mind, and, to console me for my sleepless night, I had Hernandez' valerian.



## CHAPTER IV.

ONE day, when I had been attending the marriage of a pretty girl at whose birth, fifteen years previously, I had officiated in my professional capacity, and returned from the Hacienda de la Cruz at half-past ten p.m., my Indian said to me,—

“Señor, they have sent for you three times to-day from the General’s.”

“What for?”

“*Quien sabe?* I think there is some one in his house wanting to die.”

I hastened to lay aside my riding-gaiters and spurs, and was preparing to go out, when my Indian added, with the phlegmatic slowness of his race,—

“The messenger said if you did not re-

turn until after nine you need not disturb yourself."

It was then striking eleven, so I returned to my room, and, before I went to bed, I noted down some reflections upon the Toltecs which had been suggested to me by the marriage I had witnessed that day.

The next morning, at seven o'clock, an alguazil knocked at my door. I rose and questioned the man with considerable uneasiness.

"A forced loan?" said I, smiling.

"No, señor."

"A sick call?" I asked gravely.

"No, señor."

"What then?"

The alguazil placed his long cavalry sword under his left arm, raised his hat to pull from under it a red handkerchief, with which he wiped his forehead, replaced his heavy headgear at the proper angle, and answered,—

"*Quien sabe?*"

When a Mexican has pronounced those

sacramental words, all further interrogation is superfluous. I followed my guide in silence, thinking of Colonel Ramon. His wife and children, whom I ostensibly visited, had been convalescent for the last three weeks. Two days previously, on entering the cabin, I had unexpectedly found myself in the presence of the Colonel himself. He explained that he had waited there for me, as he could not resist his desire to shake me by the hand and thank me. After I had severely censured his imprudence, I joined his wife in entreating him to leave Orizava, and to repair to one of the towns occupied by his own party. At last he promised to follow our advice, and we bade each other farewell. By this time he ought to be far away.

On arriving at the quarters of my friend General Slave, I remarked an unusual stir. A platoon of soldiers, with grounded arms, was stationed in one corner of the courtyard; orderlies were coming and going. I was taken at once to the General, who

rose, on hearing my name, from a table at which he had been sorting an immense number of letters.

He did not return my salutation, but addressed me thus:—

“Really, doctor, if you make your patients wait as long for you as justice has to wait, we shall have to fine you heavily some day. Since yesterday we have been looking for you in vain.”

“I was at the Hacienda de la Cruz,” I replied; “and it happens to me so seldom, señor, to be absent for twenty-four hours, that only a fatality can—”

“Answer me, doctor, and do not attempt to deceive me, if you value your liberty.”

The blood rushed into my face; a natural indignation rose within me; nevertheless, I had the courage to turn my tongue round seven times in my mouth, according to the precept of the wise man, so that I might not say anything unreasonable.

“Colonel Ramon is still in the city,”

resumed the General. "Do you not know, doctor, that my principle of action is the carrying out of the law?"

"I know that you are an honest man, General, and, therefore, I am surprised that you should speak to me in such a tone. Falsehood in any shape is unknown to me, and the Academy of—"

"You know Colonel Ramon?"

"I know him."

"You are also aware that there is a price on his head?"

"I am also aware," I replied, "that humanity has always condemned, especially in political matters, those barbarous expedients—"

"Let us not discuss the question, señor; the crime of *lèse-nation* is involved in the fact of withholding a criminal from the justice of the people; it is a public duty to reveal, to denounce—"

"Permit me to interrupt you in my turn, General; an honest man does not denounce any one."

“You know the place in which Colonel Ramon is hidden?”

“Yes,” I answered boldly.

“It is in the city?”

“*Quien sabe?*”

“You forget, doctor, that I can have you shot?”

“No, indeed; I do not.”

“Speak, then! Your revelations may prevent much bloodshed.”

“How would you answer me, General, if I were to propose to you that you should do a dishonourable deed?”

The General turned away his head, pulled his moustache, and began to stride up and down the room.

“If Rome, in its decline,” said I, “favoured informers, Domitian, before the madness of cruelty which has made his name execrable, expelled them from Italy. The Emperor Theodosius, less clement than he, condemned them to death. Cæsar, in his *Commentaries*—”

The clatter of horses' hoofs was heard;

the General approached the window, and uttered an exclamation. Then came the clanking of swords, the door was thrown open, and I was utterly confounded by the appearance of Colonel Ramon, his clothes torn, and a bleeding wound in his breast. I ran towards him; he recoiled, and looked at me strangely.

"I have been betrayed! Is it not so?" said he, between his clenched teeth.

"I believed you to be already far away, Colonel," said I, in grieved accents.

"I meant to have gone this evening. Who is it that has betrayed me? When they shoot me, they ought also to shoot the Judas who has sold me."

Slave knew his enemy by reputation only; he was looking at him curiously.

"Let me be unbound, señor," said the Colonel to him; "these cords hurt me, and I do not dream of escape."

The General made a sign.

"He has killed one of our men," said an officer.

“Yes ; in the defence of my life,” replied the Colonel quickly.

“Loose him,” said the General.

I helped to cut the cords that bound the prisoner’s arms, and said to him,—

“You are wounded ?”

“It is only a scratch. They surprised me while I was sleeping.”

“If you had believed me—if you had taken your poor wife’s advice—”

“Regrets have never yet repaired any evil, doctor, and I must not look back to the past. Promise me that you will not leave my wife during the cruel hours that are coming to her. After my execution she will wish to return to her natal city. Will you help her to do so ?”

“I swear to you that I will. Indeed, if necessary, I will take her there myself.”

The Colonel pressed my hand. During this short conversation, five or six officers had formed a group round the table ; but the General, whose stature surpassed that



of any of them, continued to pace the room restlessly, giving stern brief orders.

"You are going to try me?" said Colonel Ramon, suddenly turning towards him.

"No, señor, simply to establish your identity; afterwards you may send for a priest."

"Of what crime am I accused, that I should merit death without trial?"

"Of the crime of having fought against the troops of the Supreme Government."

"On the contrary, I commanded them," said the Colonel haughtily. "Miramon is the elect of the people."

He said no more; his breath came short, the veins of his temples swelled. Like myself a few minutes previously, he was restraining himself in obedience to the precepts of the sage. Presently he asked, in a voice so calm that it surprised me, how many hours he had at his disposal.

"As many as you require, Colonel," answered Slave.

"I ask you for two only, señor : one to put my soul into a state to appear before God ; the other to embrace my children, and endeavour to console my wife."

"Gentlemen," said Slave, turning with a troubled countenance to the officers, who were all ill at ease, "I charge you to answer, as Christians to whom falsehood is hateful, do you recognize the man here present as Colonel—"

"Spare these gentlemen the pain of contributing to my death by answering you, General," interrupted Colonel Ramon. "I am he whom you seek."

The officers—every one of them was deadly pale—approached the Colonel, and each in succession held out his hand, without uttering a single word. As for me, I was bewildered, horrified, sick. The idea that the strong man by whose side I was standing, whose hand rested in mine, had but two hours to live, seemed to me something monstrous and impossible. The General was an executioner in my eyes,

and yet I knew him to be a humane man; he also was a husband and father.

"May I ask a favour of you?" said I, going close up to the General.

"Anything, doctor, except the life of this man."

"It will take me forty-eight hours to go to Mexico. Will you grant me a reprieve for that time?"

At this moment a woman burst into the room. She was followed by an old officer, who, although he was scolding her, and pulling at her arm, was evidently helping her all the time.

"Stand back! Stand back!" said he, "or at least wait until I tell the General."

I recognized my patient. She turned her great black eyes on each of us in slow agonized appeal; and then, just as her husband, who had turned as white as a corpse at sight of her, stepped forward to support her, she cast herself down at Slave's knees, striving to speak, but finding no utterance except her sobs.

“Pardon, pardon!” I cried, while the Colonel raised his speechless wife from the floor, held her in his arms, and spoke to her in soft low tones.

“Let me take her back, señor,” said he, addressing the General; “at the hour you appoint I will stand before your firing-party.”

The General made no reply. The old officer, who had so ineffectually opposed the entrance of Colonel Ramon’s wife, pushed two men roughly into the room. I immediately recognized them as the stockmen of the Cerritos de San Juan.

“Here are two fellows who claim their pay, General. Shall we hang them?”

The Colonel advanced, and looked steadily in the face of the two wretches, who hung their heads, and retreated until they were stopped by the wall.

“Pay them,” said the General, with disgust, “and let them be soundly beaten if ever they attempt to come near any place where I am.”

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The stockmen were hurried out, hustled by the soldiers, and hooted by the crowd in the street.

Don Ramon kept hold of his wife, who tried to throw herself again at the General's knees. Slave looked out of the window. I ardently, urgently implored him, telling him of Greeks and Romans, of Scipio and Epaminondas, and ever so many other heroes famous for their magnanimity. I cited Topittzin, the great King of the Toltecs, who had not only pardoned enemies of the State, but his own personal enemies. The Colonel listened to me with evident surprise; his wife, whose sobs never abated, gazed at me; she did not understand much of what I said, but she knew that I was pleading for her husband. All of a sudden Slave turned to the Colonel, and said,—

“Will you take service in my ranks?”

“No,” replied the prisoner.

“Will you at least swear not to fight against us any more?”

“Swear for the sake of your children,” murmured the hapless wife. “Swear, swear!” for she saw that he was hesitating.

And she tried to make him stretch out his hand.

The Colonel was silent, but his keen, hard, piercing glance sought mine, as though to question and consult me.

At length he spoke.

“I have those who love me, and I have no right to despise life; but however strongly I may desire to preserve it, I cannot be false to my convictions, I cannot take an oath which circumstances might prevent me from keeping. All that I can promise, señor, is, that I will not go outside of this city, but hold myself your prisoner until the day on which my party shall retake it.”

“You are free, Colonel,” said Slave, whom I regarded with admiration; “I trust to your word. If by any chance the Supreme Government should disapprove of my action, I will give you twenty-four

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hours' notice beforehand, and you will have time to seek a place of safety."

Thus the Colonel's life was safe in any case, and his wife understood that as I did. She covered the General's hand with kisses; he drew it gently away; and while her husband led her out, I threw myself on Slave's neck, and kissed him in the French fashion on both cheeks, to his great surprise. He pressed my hand in return, and invited me to breakfast with him. He seemed very happy about the decision he had come to, and talked a great deal of my essay upon the Toltecs. At breakfast, I related to his wife—she was renowned for her beauty throughout the whole department of Vera Cruz—how, thanks to the example of certain Greeks and Romans, and of King Topittzin, her husband had just performed one of those deeds which confer immortality. The General admitted that my arguments had struck him; but these great examples fire great hearts only, and General Slave was one of those.

## CHAPTER V.

THE day before yesterday I was thinking about Gibbon, and that solemn moment, at which the great historian, after having written the last word of his immortal book, slowly laid down his pen, with emotion so strong and real that he imparts it to his readers by his description. I, indeed, have no pretension to compare my work upon the Toltecs with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*—there is but one point of similarity between them, the respective length of each—but I am approaching the term of my task; in two or three days the labour, which I have pursued in the midst of civil war, will have come to an end. A week ago I was




talking about this to Colonel Ramon, whom I see but seldom, when at long intervals he brings me instalments of the money which I was so happy to lend him.

It is eighteen months since the Supreme Government ratified the action of General Slave with approbation, and since then the Colonel has been free. He is a singular man, this soldier; he refused the half-pay which Slave offered him, and borrowed a hundred piastres from me on his personal security. With this money the Colonel bought tallow, and set himself, with the assistance of his children, to the making of mould candles. At first the candles turned out by my *protégé* were queer-looking articles—thin, twisted, uneven things; but no matter, everybody bought them; for the whole city appreciated the honesty, stoicism, and self-denial of this brave officer, who toiled from morning to night for so little, all trades which require but a short apprenticeship being ill paid. By degrees the Colonel's candles improved;

they became straight, smooth—in fact, quite superior articles. He succeeded in making a livelihood for himself and his family, and was even able to refund my loan to him in small sums. We do not see much of each other, for all that: he has his boilers to attend to; I, my patients to visit, and my great work to finish; and neither he nor I find time hang heavily on our hands.

The Colonel is, besides, of a gloomy disposition, very uncommunicative, and hardly educated at all. His wife, who is as brave and self-denying as himself, cheerfully endures their obscure and penurious life; she, who was born in the upper class, and who drapes herself so elegantly in the folds of her mantilla on the great festival days. Out of doors the Colonel invariably wears his blue jacket with black braid, which is, it would seem, not to be worn out. He is an earnest Catholic, an old crusader who has strayed into our age. His political ideas are, however, advanced; and if the



Liberals would only leave the clergy in peace, the Colonel would no longer regard them as enemies. This I have from himself.

I never saw him break down but once.

"Poverty is a hateful thing," he said to me. "At any price whatever I will never again be a prey to it."

"Yet you would always prefer it to dishonour?"

"No," he answered dryly; "it is enough to have done so once."

I had lived twenty years in Mexico, and I never remembered civil war to have raged with such intensity. At that moment there was something in the wind, but what it was I knew not. Slave and his troops were in the field against a band of Conservatives, who were threatening the city of Jalapa. It was said that Miramon had driven Juarez out of Mexico; that a general—his name was even given—was marching on Orizava; that Puebla had "pronounced," that we were threatened

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with a siege. One must not believe more than half of the news one hears in Mexico ; and I did not believe any of this. The Liberals seemed to me to be too safely anchored. Nevertheless, after sunset the streets were empty. I sat down to my work, remained at it until two o'clock in the morning, and then went into my bedroom. The night-watchman passed under the window, and sang out in a monotonous tone,—

“The weather is fine ; all is quiet. If you are not sleeping, pray.”

At six I was roused by the sound of a trumpet, and I rose and went to inspect the last fresh plants which I had placed in my herbal ; they were epidendrons, and I was afraid of their turning black. I heard, without attaching the slightest importance to the news, that Etchagaray, the Conservative General, had made a forced march of twenty-five leagues ; that he had entered the city without striking a blow ; and that we were then guarded by six thousand

troops of the line. I finished dressing myself, laughing the while at the credulity of my Indian, who took all these fine stories for gospel. But when I went out of doors, I lost all inclination to laugh; the street was full of strange uniforms. In the great square of the parish church were troops drawn up as if for a review, and Etchagaray—I knew him personally; he borrowed five hundred piastres from me three years before on the security of the Supreme Government—was haranguing his staff. At a short distance from him, mounted upon a sorry hack, which he had procured I do not know where, was Colonel Ramon, dressed in the blue jacket with the black braid, and with a sword by his side. My Indian was right; the town had been taken.

Etchagaray was about to march on Vera Cruz, in order to take that city by surprise; and Colonel Ramon had been appointed Governor of the district of Orizava. The troops marched out in the afternoon, amid

vivas, cheers, and a general distribution of laurel wreaths to the soldiers, by the people who only yesterday shouted "Long live Liberty!" so loudly. Slave was flying, abandoned by his troops; only his national guards remained faithful to him. It would not be wise to venture out on the high roads, to which the deserters proposed to betake themselves.

At seven o'clock I was standing on the threshold, looking at the sunset, expecting to be summoned to my dinner, when an old Indian woman came in at the *porte-cochère*, perceived me, and, running to me, flung herself at my feet, with a loud cry of "Master, master!" I tried to quiet the poor creature, and begged her to explain herself. She spoke in Aztec, and I could only distinguish a few words of her disjointed phrases:—"My son—Colonel Ramon—he is to die!" While she spoke she strove to drag me away with her.

"Ha," said I to myself, "my friend the

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Colonel is already organizing his regiment, and no doubt he has taken the son of this poor woman." General Nègrété had often pointed out to me that, in a country where all the soldiers are taken by force, to obtain the liberty of one in particular is to cause an injustice to be done. Nevertheless, I was so touched by the grief of the poor mother that I allowed her to take me away with her, at the very moment that my dinner was announced.

It was dark ; the Indian woman guided me, and, seeing that she took the direction of the barrack, I concluded that I had guessed aright. I tried to question her, and gain some information that might help me to plead her cause. But she only hurried on faster, gasping out,—

" On, on ; he is going to die ! "

As I passed through the gate of the principal quarter of the soldiers, the sentinel on duty stopped my companion. I insisted on his allowing her to pass, and invoked the name of the Colonel.

"It would be a cruelty to obey you, doctor," said a sergeant who knew me.

I saw Don Ramon in the distance, and told the poor woman to wait for me.

"Do not let him die!" she cried, passionately kissing my hand.

I made my way into the first court of the old Carmelite convent, which has long been transformed into a barrack. A blazing fire of pine-wood lighted up the colonnades and corridors with its red flames. I stood still. Instead of the animated spectacle which I expected to see, the soldiers, silent and motionless, were all looking towards a corner sheltered by a kind of penthouse. They made way for me, and I saw two Franciscan monks, with their cowls thrown back, bending over two kneeling men, and apparently hearing their confessions. At that moment a platoon of twenty soldiers filed past, and posted themselves opposite to a white wall, in front of which two men placed a wooden bench. The great bell of the cathedral rang out, and its mournful



tones announced that prayers were asked for the dying.

I drew near, and recognized, with a sick heart, the two miserable stockmen who had delivered up the proscribed Colonel.

"What are you doing here, doctor?" said a stern, rough voice.

I turned and saw Ramon.

"Death to the traitors!" cried he, and he pulled me away from the spot.

"Are you going to order those men to be shot?"

"Certainly, doctor."

"No," I said loudly, "you shall not do this. It was, after all, their act, however infamous, which procured your liberty for you."

"You forget that they are innocent of that result."

"One of them has a mother," said I, "an unhappy mother, who does not know why you take her son from her."

"Look here, doctor; you know how highly I regard you, do you not? Very

Well, then, ask me for anything you please, except the life of these two wretches."

"I ask you for an hour's reprieve."

"What is your intention?"

"To bring your wife and children hither, and see whether you will dare to dishonour yourself before them."

"The Emperor Theodosius, you told me, doctor, condemned informers to death, and you admired him for it."

"Pray do not jest," I said imploringly, and clasping my hands.

"You know me little," he replied, "if you do not know that I am inflexible."

"You are brave, and courage allies itself ill with cruelty."

"It is easy to be seen, doctor, that a price has never been set on your head."

I rushed out of the room into which he had taken me, to place myself in front of the poor wretches who were about to die, thus to face the soldiers and retard the execution. I had a wild hope of saving the criminals by gaining time.

At the same instant that I appeared in the court, shouting "Pardon, pardon!" at all hazards, a formidable explosion was heard, bullets whistled, and the two stockmen, shot from behind as spies, slid down along the wall, which was splashed with their blood.

"So perish all traitors!" said the cold, quiet voice of the Colonel, "and long live Religion!"

I recoiled from this man; he spoke to me, but I was choked with indignation; I could not answer him. He put out his hand; I turned, and fled from him. At the barrack-gate I found the old Indian woman, half mad, and I took her home with me. I have just written to claim the body of her son; this is the sole service which I will demand from Colonel Ramon.

How unfathomable are the mysteries of the human heart! On this day, 20th June, 1867, I learn that the Emperor Maximilian

was shot yesterday, having been treacherously delivered up to his enemies by Colonel Ramon Miguel Lopez, who will have some troublesome accounts to settle with Almighty God.

THE END.

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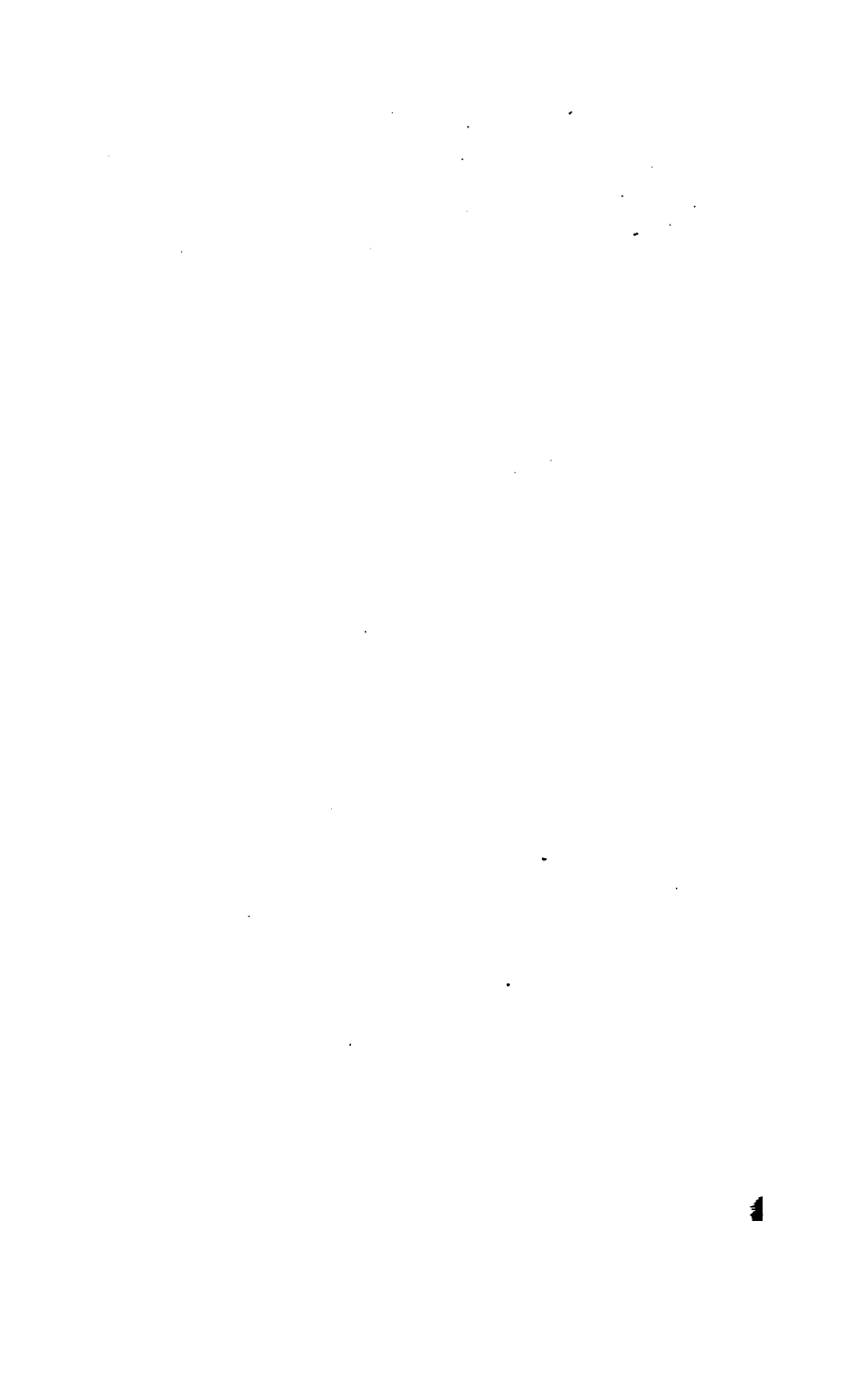
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